

Inumajin

ILLUSTRATION BY

Kochimo



FINAL

Woof Woof Story

I TOLD YOU TO TURN ME INTO A
Pampered Pooch.

NOT FENRIR!





**Woof
Woof
Story**

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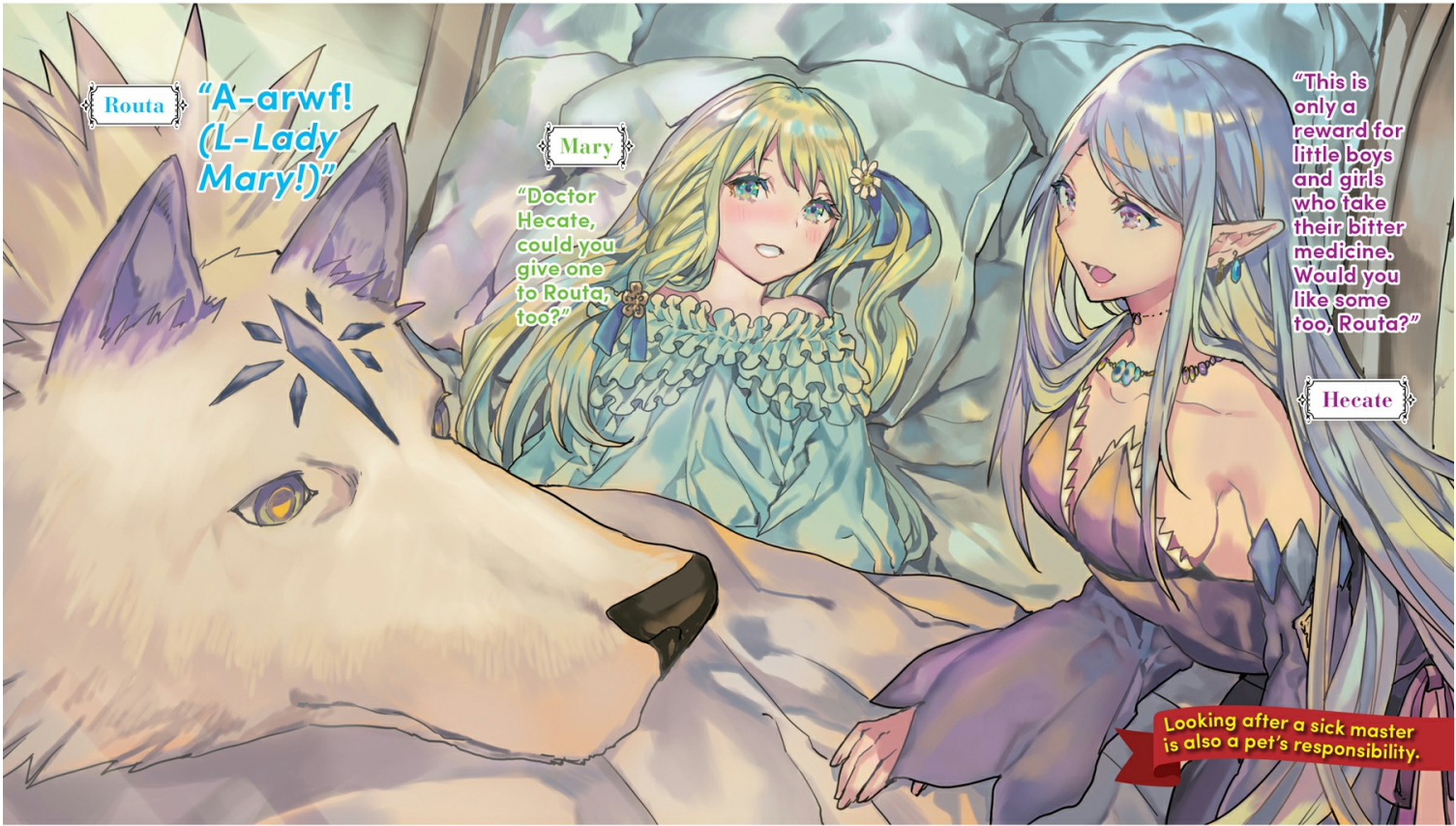
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Routa

"A-arwf!
(L-Lady
Mary!)"

Mary

"Doctor
Hecate,
could you
give one
to Routa,
too?"

"This is
only a
reward for
little boys
and girls
who take
their bitter
medicine.
Would you
like some
too, Routa?"

Hecate

Looking after a sick master
is also a pet's responsibility.





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ON**
NEW YORK

Copyright

Woof Woof Story

I TOLD YOU TO TURN ME INTO A *Pampered Pooch*, NOT FENRIR!

VOLUME 7

Inumajin

Translation by Andrew Prowse

Cover art by Kochimo

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

WANWAN MONOGATARI Volume 7 -KANEMOCHI NO INU NI SHITETOWA
ITTAGA, FENRIR NISHIROTOWA ITTENEE!-

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A great tree looms deep in the forest.

Next to it sits a lone house, one that looks like it's been part of the tree since it first sprouted—the workshop of Hecate Luluarus, the witch.

“Woof, woof. *(Wow, that's cool. High fantasy much?)*”

“What does that mean?” giggles Hecate, having invited us inside.

“Arwf, arwf. *(I've always kind of had a thing for houses fused into trees, like this one.)*”

I'm a guy, after all, despite how I look. Who can blame me?

I like the homes the elves live in, too; they take advantage of the Worldtree's trunk, incorporating their homes into it kind of like secret tree houses. But Hecate's workshop is older than any of theirs by eons, and the tree's branches reach all the way inside it.

“Arwf. *(This place is really calming for some reason.)*”

Maybe it's the leaves growing straight out of the ceiling? I can totally feel the negative ions.

“Normally, being invited into a witch's house is cause for caution.”

“Arwf? *(It is?)*”

“Mm-hmm. A witch's workshop is where she is most powerful. They're filled with traps and curses. The moment you set foot inside, you've essentially entered my stomach.”

“Arf... *(I'm in Hecate's belly...? That explains the maternal aura I'm feeling.)*”

“...Sometimes I have absolutely no idea what you're talking about, Routa.”

That's impossible! The desire to revert to babyhood upon feeling this is fundamental to the entire human race, isn't it?

“Squeak... (As always, I don’t know what you’re getting at, but...)”

“Mewl. (One thing’s for sure: It’s definitely something really creepy!)”

“Woof, woof! (It’s not creepy! It’s a very natural reaction to have!)”

I wish you’d consider how much better this is—I could be complaining about how much I want to go back to the young lady, *right now*.

“Squeal, squeal. (Your mystery doth make thee all the more wonderful, my lifelong companion.)”

Who are you calling your *lifelong companion*?

Turning around, I see a golden-furred feline creature quietly walking in. That would be the war demon, king of all beasts, Behemoth, who has at some point decided to make me her lifelong companion. Amazingly, she was—according to Hecate—the strongest magical beast in the entire Demon Lord’s army.

“Squeal, squeal. (That I am no longer, for I have entrusted all my powers unto that witch. Now I am naught but a single beast who loveth thou dearly.)”

Gee, that’s just great. It wasn’t enough to have a pet cat and mouse doing the exact same thing to me, was it? Having one more just makes things harder.

“Squeak! (Who are you calling a mouse?! I am the proud princess of the dragons, Lenowyrn!)”

“Meow! (And I’m Nahura! This book isn’t big enough for two cats!)”

“Squeal, squeal. (Ah, thou art already in possession of two mistresses? That is well, that is well. That is how males should be.)”

“S-squeak! (Why, you little...! Even your speech pattern is an imitation of my own! You’re a counterfeit! A sham!)”

“Squeal, squeal. (What? Dost thou suggest that thou somehow resemblst me? Absurd. Lay thine eyes upon my splendiferous fur, golden as the sun! It is the perfect match for Routa’s coat, which is silvery as the moon.)”

“Squeak! (I’m not referring to our appearances! Being able to grow fur doesn’t make one great! I’m also great, you know—I am! And eventually my appearance will change into one my beloved favors!)”

“Mrow, mrow! *(And if we’re talking about appearances, I’m the one you’re overlapping with, you cheeky little newcomer! Your fluffy, golden fur makes me jealous! Are you trying to pick a fight with shorthairs?!)*”

“Arf. *(Your true feelings are coming out. So it’s just one big circle of envy, huh?)*”

Also, I’m not a furry. None of you have a shot with me anyway. I’m going to live my whole life as the young lady’s puppy, getting petted and coddled, eating delicious food, and sleeping as much as I want. You’d have to at least get into a position where you could provide for *me*. Then we’ll talk.

“Why don’t you all take a seat and wait a moment?”

Hecate leads us to a large wooden table and leaves us there. She told us to seat ourselves, but none of us need chairs.

“Arf, arf. *(Heh, I’m used to stretching out on the floor by now.)*”

It’s been almost a year since I was reborn as Fenrir—er, rather, as a dog. I’ve already forgotten how to sit in a chair.

“Squeak. *(And I doubt any chairs would be able to support your weight.)*”

“Mew! *(I can see it now: all the chair legs snapping right in half!)*”

Len and Nahura climb up on my back after I lie down. And yet *they* get on top of me like it’s natural...

“Squeal, squeal? *(Ah! Having mistresses ride upon one’s back is the latest and most popular way to have them serve you, is it?)*”

It’s not a fad and they’re *not* my mistresses.

“Squeal. *(In that case, pray excuse my own rudeness as I join them...)*”

If you need to excuse yourself, just don’t.

Well, she gets up on my back to get some height, and her face comes right up above the table.

Fine, I *guess* I’ll let you use my back this one time. I just hope you’re grateful!

“Sorry for the wait!”

Hecate has returned. A tray floats in the air behind her with a teapot and cups on it. The levitating tea set, moving in accordance with Hecate's fingertips, settles itself in front of us.

"Woof, woof. *(You always have the handiest magic.)*"

Nahura uses magic, too, but Hecate does it with more practiced movements. The cups are arranged with precision before the teapot pours black tea into them.

"Arwf! *(That smells good!)*"

I take in the sweet, refreshing scent that you can only get from herbal teas.

"Hee-hee. It was actually quite difficult to make."

After putting her elbow on the table and taking a seat, Hecate waggles her finger again. A large plate comes flying out of the back room toward us, then it places itself right in the center of the table.

This fragrant scent... My head jerks up.

"Arwwwf! *(It's pie!)*"

I've eaten Hecate's homemade pie once before; it was filled to the brim with raspberries, with a perfect balance between tartness and sweetness. And most of all, the flakiness of the crust was to die for.

"Arwf, arwf?! *(What kind of pie is it this time?! What flavor?!)*"

"Hee-hee. Why not take a guess?"

A wooden knife cuts into the big pie, crunching through the crust. The piping-hot steam wafts over to my nose, and the faint acidity combined with the robustly sweet smell clues me in immediately.

I shout out the answer.

"Arwf! *(Apple pie!)*"

Apple pie. The pie of pies. The king of them all. I can say one thing for sure—you can't think of pie without apple pie coming to mind.

"And for getting it right, you get two slices."

“Arwf! (Yes!)”

And I can have seconds, too, right? Naturally?

The pie is set down, having been cut and sectioned onto a small plate, and the fruit juices come wafting up from the open sides of the slices.

“Squeak. (*Oh, this smells quite good.*)”

“Squeal, squeal... (*This is my first time eating this confection known as ‘pie.’ My heart veritably poundeth. Though it poundeth significantly less than it did when I first met Routa, my soul mate...*)”

I’d rather that have been backward. Just fall in love with apple pie instead. Please.

“Mew... (*I’ll admit it’s delicious, but I’m a little tired after all those practice pies she made me taste-test...*)”

“Oh, did you say something?”

“Meow! (*Um, n-no, nothing at all!*)”

Still haven’t fixed that habit of always saying a little too much, huh?

More importantly, it’s time for apple pie.

“Sniff, sniff. (*Can I eat it? Can I?*)”

Seeing my tail wagging back and forth, Hecate giggles. “Please, be my guest.”

“Arwf! (*Don’t have to tell me twice!*)”

I waste no time chomping into the apple pie. Even this extra-large-sized pie slice fits into my huge mouth in one bite.

“Arwf?! (*Why... Why, this is...?!*)”

So flaky—so incredibly flaky!

The raspberry pie I ate the first time was crisp and flaky, too, even when cold. It was plenty delicious in its own right, but this fresh-out-of-the-oven flakiness is on another level. It’s way past flaky: it’s super-flaky. No, ascended *beyond* super-flaky. The crust has so many layers, and every time my teeth crunch through them, it leaves behind a satisfying feel in my mouth.

And these apples locked away inside the pastry—having been cooked, the flesh of the fruit has softened, the sourness is gone, and as soon as I bite into it, the pure juices burst out.

It's amazing. But that's not all. Underneath the thick layer of apples is a sweet, smooth cream on the bottom. I can't think of a stronger complement for apples to have. A spectacular debut for this custard cream, and all the eggs used for it. Its rich sweetness goes perfectly with the apples' refreshing juices, creating an altogether unmatched flavor.

"Arwf, arwf!! (It's so good! How is it so good?!)"

It tastes so amazing I feel like I'm gonna faint.....

No. I can't. I can't faint now.

Not until I've eaten all of this apple pie, at least!

"...Well, I hope you at least wait until you've heard what I have to say," says Hecate, her face mildly appalled.

"Arwf? (There was something to talk about?)"

With the second slice of pie in my mouth, having already slurped up the first, I tilt my head in confusion.

"Squeak... (You've already forgotten...)"

"Mew... (Routa, your memory gets worse by the day...)"

"Squeal, squeal. (Thou art still wonderful in thy foolishness, Routa.)"

Don't look at me with those eyes.

"Arf, grf. (Munch, munch. No, wait, I remember. I came to ask about my lady's illness.)"

Lady Mary should have gotten healthy after taking the medicine made from that wyrmnil. But recently, she'd had a mild fever. I was worried, so I decided I'd ask Hecate about it.

But then Hecate called me to her instead, and no sooner had she brought me here than Behemoth here showed up. And no sooner did Behemoth show up than she turned into a cat, and then Hecate invited us in to explain everything.

That's how we ended up enjoying this apple pie.

"Arwf, arwf. (See? I remember. Don't treat me like a senile old man.)"

Though I do get the feeling I've been mindless in my enjoyment of my pet life for a little too long now, and my brain is starting to melt. How could I possibly get senile after only a little over half a year since being born?

"In that case, you can keep eating while you listen." Hecate takes a sip of black tea, then begins quietly. "Firstly... Yes, I'll be going to give Mary medicine for her fever after this, and I think it will go down right away."

I see—that's a relief. So it's not that the medicine itself lost its effects. If she can take more medicine for a fever to cure it, I guess it's not that much to worry about.

"Squeak. (If the latrine grass stops working, I will let her drink my urine, so there is no need to worry. It should be much more effective than that measly grass.)"

"Woof, woof. (Look, seriously, stop messing around.)"

Why would I make the young lady drink mouse piss?

"Squeak! (I am not messing around! A dragon's urine is famed for its valuable and miraculous medicinal effects! Even royalty has desired it in pursuit of immortality since times immemorial!)"

"Woof, woof! (Mixing it into a medicine is one thing, but you were trying to get her to drink it directly!)"

That would be so incredibly rude to her. I have to stop this at all costs.

"Squeak... (I spoke out of kindness... Why can you not realize how grateful she should be for it...?)"

If there's anything I can say in response to her mutterings, it's that we have cultural differences. Yes, that's the only thing.

"May I continue?"

"Arwf. (Oops, yeah. Go ahead.)"

Even though our conversations always veer off course, this *does* involve the

young lady's illness. We should listen seriously.

"Mary's fever will go down for a time, but after a while, it will start to come back up again."

"Arwf, arwf? *(Can't she just take more medicine when that happens?)*"

If she only has to take it once every six months, it won't put much stress on her physically.

"The next time it will flare up is a month from now."

"Arf? *(Huh? But she held out for six months last time.)*"

"And the time after that will be one week—and then one day. In the end, taking the medicine won't be enough to keep the fever from rising."

"A-arwf, arwf?! *(Wait—wait, hold on! That's really bad, isn't it?)*"

Would it really lose effectiveness that quickly? Don't you have a new medicine she can use?

"There's no point in medicating her anymore. Mary's fevers aren't symptoms of an illness."

They're not? What does that mean? Isn't that why you're filling the role of her doctor and checking up on her?

"There's absolutely nothing wrong with Mary's body."

"Arwf? *(Wait, then why does she keep getting fevers?)*"

If she's healthy, she shouldn't be getting any symptoms as all, should she?

"Let me go in order," says Hecate, taking a sip of tea. "Mary's family, the Faulks family, has a very long history."

Well, they're nobility. Makes sense that their history would go back pretty far.

"For a long time, the Faulks family has had just one responsibility."

"Arwf? *(A responsibility?)*"

"Yes—an important one. The women have passed it down from generation to generation."

The women? Come to think of it, Papa married into the family, didn't he? Is

their clan matrilineal?

“The first time Mary had a fever was three years after inheriting that responsibility. And it was also three years after her mother, Marianna, passed away.”

She mentioned that her mother died when she was little. Does that have something to do with the responsibility Hecate is talking about?

“For a long, long time, the Faulks family has sacrificed itself to uphold its duty.”

“Squeak. (*This is so roundabout. We’ll get nowhere unless you say what this duty is.*)” says Len, hurriedly munching on what’s left of her pie.

“I suppose. It isn’t something I really want to talk about, but...” Hecate’s eyes darkened. “That which is undermining the Faulks family—Mary’s body—is...”

That which is? Quit being all high and mighty and just say it already.

“The Demon Lord’s seal.”



Hmm. I see. The Demon Lord’s seal, eh?

I get it. Right. I understand.

“A-arwf?! (*Wait, the Demon Lord’s seal?!*)”

I spit out the pie I’d been loudly chewing.

What does that mean?! I thought we were talking about her illness—but now this crazy Demon Lord person suddenly came up! Is Lady Mary sealing the Demon Lord?!

“Mary isn’t aware of it. I haven’t told her. But it’s true—within that girl’s body is the key to sealing the Demon Lord.”

I don’t follow. Lady Mary is just a regular person. Why are we suddenly talking about the Demon Lord’s seal?

“Do you know how the Demon Lord tried to destroy the world one thousand years ago?”

“Woof. (Yeah, Lady Mary reads to me about it all the time.)”

The legend of the hero Routa is her favorite book. She likes it so much that she named me after that hero. She’s read it to me so many times that I have the whole thing memorized.

The fairy tale is all about how the hero Routa, along with his companions, defeat the five generals—the Demon Lord’s subordinates—and in the end, destroy the Demon Lord and save the world.

“Not all of it is made up. It’s based on real events.”

Seriously? Well, the Demon Lord’s generals have been resurfacing in this generation, after all. There’s proof enough of it on my back right now, eating pie.

“But that fairy tale doesn’t have the same ending as what really happened. The hero and the others couldn’t defeat the Demon Lord. The Demon Lord was too fearsome, too powerful.”

“Squeak. (You speak as though you saw it personally.)”

“That’s because I did.”

“Arwf?! (What?! Hecate, you were there at the time?!)”

“Indeed, I was. Are you surprised?”

Well, of course I am! Someone straight out of a fairy tale is right in front of me. Actually, does that make her one of the heroes in the story?

“I’m not all that heroic, but yes. I couldn’t protect the friends I cared so much about, either. I’m a fool of a witch,” says Hecate self-deprecatingly. “Our power wasn’t enough to defeat the Demon Lord. The only option we had was for the Hero to use her body to seal him away. But that seal became a terrible burden for the Hero to bear.”

Is Hecate recalling actual memories from back then?

“At most, she would live to be thirty. The first Hero had a child five years after the seal, then passed away.”

So the Hero was a woman, then, to have given birth to a child.

“Yes: Eilene Faulks. The most precious friend in the world to me. To atone for not being able to save her, I vowed to watch over her children and grandchildren and maintain the seal.”

After that, she said, she would teach all the seals of the Faulks family their duty, living only to preserve their bodies and the seal.

For a thousand years—for the whole time.

A child would be born, and Hecate would be entrusted with that child and the seal both; and as the child grew and loved her like a mother, she had to watch that child grow weaker and weaker every day under the burden of the curse.

And then the child, weakened by the curse, would bear a daughter, and entrust the seal to that daughter, before passing away herself.

Hecate had repeated that process for an entire millennium.

“But now it, too, has reached its limit.”

The seal’s limit. It seems it’s come during Lady Mary’s generation.

“The seal would have lasted another ten years, but it is about to be undone. Wyrmnail can only lower her fevers and lighten the burden on her. The spell of the seal is about to be undone.”

“A-arf? (*Wh-what’ll happen when it’s undone?*)”

“She’ll die. And not only Mary—all living creatures in this world will be obliterated.”

“.....”

This...this is a little too heavy. You made the taste of the apple pie go away.

“A-arf? (*I-isn’t there some way to fix it?*)”

I couldn’t help but ask the question, even though I knew there would be nothing of the sort.

“There is.”

“Arwf?! (*So there is, then?!*)”

Why didn’t you say that first?! You had me seriously scared!

“But your help will be indispensable, Routa.”

“Arf? *(My help?)*”

My only merit is my cuteness. How would I be able to solve a major problem related to the Demon Lord? Wouldn't common sense say it's impossible?

“Squeak. *(Common sense would say that if you can't solve the problem, then no one can.)*”

“Mew. *(I really think you should just give up and admit that you're Fenrir, and you're the strongest.)*”

“Squeal, squee! *(Indeed. And I wish thou wouldst admit that thou art my lifelong companion as well!)*”

Not yet. I'm not giving up just yet. If I admit that, then that ruins the possibility that I really am just a cute puppy dog who happens to be on the big side.

“Mew. *(That possibility never existed from the start.)*”

“Arwf! *(Shut up! There must be a few tiny particles of that possibility somewhere around here!)*”

“Squeak...? *(Does it not make you sad to say that...?)*”

N-no, it doesn't at all! I'm an adorable pet puppy dog! Even if nobody else understands me, my lady always will.

“Arf, arf! *(And if she's in a bind, then it falls to me—her pet—to rescue her!)*”

If possible, though, I'd rather heal her with my fluffy, lovable body.

“You'll fight this tooth and claw, won't you?”

“Arwf... *(Yeah...)*”



“Arf, arf. *(Well, if we're going to do it, we should get it over with.)*”

“So, you'll do it?” asks Hecate, peering into my eyes for confirmation.

“Arwf, arwf. *(It doesn't matter if I don't want to, does it? If I don't, the world gets destroyed.)*”

That wouldn't be good. It would be really bad.

It's not just the young lady—there are a lot of people in this world who mean a lot to me. If I need to protect them, then yeah, I'll lend them a helping paw.

"Arf, arf? (Actually, if the world gets destroyed, that means my pet life of eating and sleeping would be ruined anyway, wouldn't it?)"

That is the one thing I will absolutely have to prevent. I need the young lady to live a long life and keep looking after me forever.

"Squeak. (You are selfish to the end.)"

"Mewl. (That's so like you, Routa.)"

"Squeak, squeak. (Thou art wonderful in that way as well, Routa.)"

Would you stop butting in whenever you want? You three will probably be pitching in, too, you know.

"Arf, arf. (Anyway, what exactly do I have to do? I can't defeat the Demon Lord after he's unsealed, right? It would be too late then.)"

Otherwise, we would just need to undo the seal burdening her body right now. But Hecate hasn't done that, which means that breaking the seal wouldn't lead to resolving the problem.

"Mewl... (Routa just said something smart...)"

See? You're changing the topic again.

"You're right, Routa. We won't be undoing the Demon Lord's seal. But we can't defeat the Demon Lord while sealed."

Wait, isn't this all counterintuitive, then? How are we supposed to beat the thing in that case?

"I'll have you go to the past and defeat the Demon Lord."

"A-arwf? (G-go to the past?)"

"Yes. You'll defeat the Demon Lord before the sealing, one thousand years ago."

Wait, wait, wait, wait. You're talking about time travel like it's so simple, but

I'm no time machine.

"Do you know what school of magic I specialize in?"

Well, of course. You make things float, you instantly warp things to where they want to go— "And the other is space-time magic."

"Arwf, arwf? *(Space-time magic—so you can make time go faster or slower?)*"

I think back to when Hecate used her magic in the past. She healed the Worldtree in the elves' village after it had been smashed up and burned, almost like she'd been turning back time.

"Squeak. *(Impossible. Space-time magic isn't a handy tool to be used on a whim.)*"

Len, the ageless meathead, climbs up onto my head.

"Squeak, squee-squeak. *(Simply turning back time for a few hours is a monumental feat, but one thousand years? Ridiculous. Even if you could construct such a spell, it would take an incredible amount of time simply to inscribe the magic circle—to say nothing of your mana, which would be entirely lacking. It is an utterly impractical proposition.)*"

"Perhaps. But I've had plenty of time. Did you think I'd only come up with this plan in the last day or so?"

"Squeak? *(What?)*"

"It took me all of one thousand years—to think of a way to resolve the two problems: the magic circle, and the mana. I wonder if Routa remembers?"

"Arf? *(Remember what? Don't expect too much from my memory.)*"

"You already know that I was the one who awakened the Demon Lord's generals, don't you?"

Well, she *did* resurrect Behemoth, who is right in front of me. She probably revived all the other ones, too. Though I have no idea why.

"Actually, it didn't begin with the Demon Lord's forces—but with that waterfall."

The waterfall? You mean the one Len was living in? It's full of holes now, and

collapsed, since I fired too many of my barf beams. And since my magical battle with Len made some kind of mana puddle or whatever, the guild felt it was abnormal and dispatched adventurers there.

We managed to trick them and get them to go home, but just as we learned the problem had reached the guild, Hecate was at the waterfall for some reason. She'd drawn this super-complicated magic circle and blown away all the mana in the area for us.

"Arf? (Wait, was that...?)"

"That's right. It was the first step in inscribing the magic circle to go to the past."

As Hecate watched over the Faulks family, she realized that the seal would eventually reach its limit. So she'd evidently been constructing the magic circle over one thousand years, all to return to the past. She'd only finished it just recently, and now, she says, all she has to do is transcribe it with her staff as the medium.

"The issue was the vast amount of mana that the magic circle needs for its foundation."

So the mana buildup was a piece of it, and a perfect one at that?

"Arf, arf? (Then why did you revive the Demon Lord's generals one at a time?)"

"Because it would not only decrease the burden of the seal on Mary, but I also wanted to use them as a source of mana. After all, one at a time even I could have handled them."

Is that why they only showed up one by one? Wait—she can beat them one-on-one, too? Wow, doesn't that make her super-strong?

I was the one who ended up fighting, but maybe Hecate originally intended to carry out this plan by herself. Meaning I was a completely uncalculated occurrence to her.

"At first, I planned on taking your mana, too, Routa."

Wait, for real?

"Fenrir, King of the Fen Wolves—such an incredibly powerful monster. It's

only natural I'd be cautious around you."

Makes sense. She'd known my identity right from the start, after all.

"But when I saw how ready you were to go get the wyrmnil for Mary's sake, I changed my mind. And that wasn't all. You saved all sorts of other people many times, too. Something about you tells me that if I trust you with this, in the end, you'll pull through."

Actually, I'd rather you not expect so much from me. The only thing I'm ever thinking about is how to protect own my pampered pooch life. I didn't intend to save people, anyway. They just got saved on their own in the end.

And besides, it's all because of this Fenrir power—I'm not much without that.

"Arwf...? (*Hmm...?*)"

It strikes me, thinking about my Fenrir power, that if Hecate had stolen my mana like she'd planned to, wouldn't I not be Fenrir anymore...?

I would have lost my power like the other generals, and seriously, *actually* could have turned into a cute little puppy dog, right...?

No. It's too late for that now.

Hecate! Change me into a fluffy little puppy!

"I don't want to."

You don't want to, huh? Figures...

"I've already decided to bet on you, Routa."

Hecate smiles mischievously.

I'd rather you not push such a weighty responsibility onto a mere pet.

Still, though, this is for my lady's sake. As her beloved dog, I'll have to do whatever I can. Besides, if the Demon Lord revives, everything is over. I don't have the choice not to do this. But even so...

"Arwf...! (*Ahh, what a pain... Such a paaaain!*)"

"Squeak. (*But you'll do it, yes? You always do.*)"

"Mewl. (*Routa always says he doesn't want to, and then he goes and does it*

anyway.)”

“Squeal, squee. (Such a caring attitude—how wonderful. I cannot help but fall in love with thee over and over again.)”

Oh, quit that. Flattery won’t get you anywhere. Also, *please* stop falling in love with me.

“I’m so glad you accept, Routa. Because in the worst-case scenario, you might defeat the Demon Lord a thousand years ago and not be able to come back.”

“Arwf? (Wait, what? You didn’t tell me that!)”

Withholding information? That’s cheating! What about safety? Can you guarantee I’ll be safe?! Shouldn’t my safe return be the primary objective?!

“Hmm, I wonder?”

“Arwf?! (Hey! Would you give me a clear answer already?!)”

I crawl over to Hecate’s feet and start nuzzling up against them.

“Meow. (It’s very like Routa to be a no-good person in these situations.)”

“Squeal. (My, my. Business as usual, but still quite unsatisfactory. Thou art wonderful even in thy lamentations.)”

Would you guys stop saying whatever you want? You’re *definitely* gonna get wrapped up in all this.

“Woof, woof? (Speaking of which, am I the only one going to the past?)”

“Well, I’d originally planned for you to go alone. But I have a considerable excess of mana thanks to the efforts of each of you, so I think you’ll be able to take a few more along.”

I see. That means Len and Nahura are coming for sure.

“Squeal! (I shall come, too, of course! I cannot be parted from my lifelong companion!)”

“Unfortunately, Behemoth will need to stay behind.”

“Squeal?! (Why is that?! Dost thou claim I lack the strength?!)”

Lack the strength? Yeah, I suppose you do. All your power was already

converted into mana so that we could go to the past.

“I need you, along with the other four generals, to support the magic circle, so I can’t have you moving out of the present time.”

“Squeeee. (*Urgh. If thou hast a role for me to play, I shall concede...*)”

That brawny golden lion form would have helped in battle, but bringing her like this will only add to the annoying noise on the way there.

“Squeak, squeak. (*Yes, that’s right. Be a good little newcomer and stay here.*)”

“Squeal, squeal. (*I suppose it shan’t be a bother to wait here for my lifelong companion.*)”

Who is this kid? She’s so strong!

“Squeal, squeal! (*Shouldst thou return safe, we shall hold a wedding!*)”

I respectfully decline.

“Squeak, squeak! (*I have been silent too long, you cheeky newcomer! You can become my beloved’s wife only after I have!*)”

Uh, no, not even after you. As Annoyance #1 squeaks away, she jumps on Annoyance #2. And then #1 is knocked down by #2’s front legs and falls over.

“S-squeak! (*S-stop this!*)”

“Squeal, squeal. (*And now I am his lawful wife. And thou art his second.*)”

“Squeak! (*I will not acknowledge this!*)”

If Len went back to being a dragon instead of a mouse, I think she’d be stronger than Behemoth, but she’s been in her mouse form for too long—I get the feeling she’s forgotten she’s actually a dragon.

“Arf, arf. (*Stop fighting up there. That’s my back, you know.*)”

The conversation got sidetracked for the...how many times does this make it?

“I’ll let you decide who you’ll take with you. There’s still a little time before you set off, so choose carefully.”

You want *me* to choose? Well, I guess I’ll ask some acquaintances.

Hecate’s explanation meeting—which was more like a tea party—ends, and

we decide to head back to the mansion.



“Gulp, gulp...”

“Okay, it’s all gone now.”

Lady Mary downs the liquid medicine Hecate handed her.

“Ugh... It’s bitter!”

She scrunches up her face. Seems good medicine is always bitter.

“You did well, so you can have this.”

Hecate tosses a small, round ball into the young lady’s mouth.

“Mm! It’s sweet!”

“It’s a candy made from violet petals.”

It must be really good, because Lady Mary is happily rolling it around in her mouth. The way her cheek pokes out like that is adorable.

“Woof, woof! (Me too! I want one, too!)”

I stick out my tongue and beg Hecate.

Nobody else is here to side with me. Len is asleep, and Nahura and Behemoth are at Hecate’s house. So this candy belongs to me alone.

Give it to me. Not just one—you can feel free to dump that entire bag into my mouth.

“This is only a reward for little boys and girls who take their bitter medicine. Would you like some, too, Routa?”

“Arwf! (That’s gonna be a big no-thank-you from me!)”

I don’t need medicine, but I do want the candy. I’d appreciate it if you understood my canine heart.

“Dr. Hecate, could you give one to Routa, too?”

“A-arwf! (L-Lady Mary!)”

You’re so nice to me, Lady Mary! I love you!

“Oh, Mary, you really do spoil Routa, don’t you?” says Hecate, giving me a piece of candy as well. Inside the light violet orb are dark violet flower petals. It’s really pretty.

“Arwf! (Well, I prefer flavor to presentation anyway!)”

I wrap my tongue around the candy and bring it into my mouth, tasting it.

“Arwf! (It’s sweet!)”

The sweetness itself isn’t that intense, but the distinct scent of violets goes up through my mouth and into my nose. It’s a strong scent, like perfume, and yet it’s refreshing, not leaving a taste in your mouth. This would definitely be a good thing to cleanse your palate after the bitter liquid medicine. I have to hand it to Hecate—she really puts a lot of thought into what she makes.

But as I’m drafting my review of the candy, it melts away in my mouth.

“Arwf...? (Could I maybe have another...?)”

I peer at her with upturned eyes, but Hecate just gives an appalled sigh. “You’re getting in the way of my examination, so I’m going to need you to leave now.”

“A-arwf... (W-wait, I was just kidding. Sorry. I won’t get in the way anymore, so...)”

I rest my head on Lady Mary’s belly, indicating with my posture that I firmly refuse to vacate the room.

“A-anyway, Doctor, Mary’s symptoms—my daughter’s symptoms, are they —?!”

Speaking up from behind Hecate is Papa, always the worrywart.

“She’ll be fine. The medicine will take effect right away, so her fever should go down by tomorrow morning.”

“Oh, thank goodness...” Papa gives a sigh of relief.

“Father, you’re always so overdramatic. It’s just a little fever.”

“Yes, but still...”

Papa is normally a dandy gentleman, but he gets really soft when it comes to

Lady Mary. Just because he really cares about her, of course.

“Okay, okay, let’s all let her rest for the remainder of the day.” Hecate claps her hands and tries to chase Papa and me out.

“Mrr. I’ve been sleeping so long. I’m not sleepy anymore.”

“No being selfish. I’ll come to check up on you again tomorrow.”

“Heh-heh. I did it!”

Lady Mary suddenly smiles as Hecate runs a hand through her hair. They really do look like mother and daughter when I see them like this.

And she *is* a descendant of Hecate’s best friend. She’s been with generations of Faulks family heads, too, so it makes sense it would be an adorable sight.

To be perfectly frank, a witch as amazing as Hecate looking after the Faulks family, though they are frontier nobles, always struck me as strange. Now that she’s told me the reason, I can totally understand the love she has for them.

“I’ll leave the rest in your hands.”

““““Yes, Lady Hecate.””””

After entrusting Lady Mary’s care to the maids, she leaves the room with us.

“Starting tomorrow, you can have her return to her usual lifestyle, so please try not to worry too much and get some sleep, Gandolf.”

“Thank you so much, Dr. Hecate. Without you, Mary would... Mary would be... Ohh...”

“There, there. Don’t cry. I do so wish I could have let Marianna live a long life as well. I’ve put you through a lot of pain...”

“No! My wife—Marianna, she was always so thankful for you. And apologetic... Sorry that she couldn’t be here forever... I don’t know what she meant by those words, but I’m sure Marianna—”

“Please, don’t say any more.”

Hecate puts a finger to Papa’s lips as he tears up, making a forlorn expression.

Papa must not know about Hecate’s past and the secret of the seal of the

Faulks family. He wouldn't have any way to resolve it if he did; it would just make him suffer.

He seems to have put a lot of money and time into searching for the cure to Lady Mary's illness, when in actuality, that cure would have to heal her body tormented by the seal, rather than fixing a physical illness. If he knew the truth, he would doubtlessly do anything to try and find a way to save her.

And even with the witch Hecate's power, returning to the past and redoing things was the only possible solution. Papa would struggle and suffer and eventually ruin himself. I suppose staying quiet about some things is its own kindness.

After seeing Papa off, Hecate walks to the mansion's exit.

"Woof, woof? *(Lady Mary will be okay for a little while, right?)*"

"Yes. She shouldn't have a problem for the next month, at least."

So basically, if I can go back to the past and defeat the Demon Lord in that time frame, she'll get better, too.

Still, I feel like changing the past is going to cause all sorts of problems, but she's the expert. This won't mean Papa won't ever have met Mama and had Lady Mary, right?

"That's why I'm here. As someone who has been alive for over a millennium, I can fix the changed history to be close to its present state."

I get it. That's the most elder-est elder for you.

"Hmm? Did you say something?"

"Arwf?! *(No, nothing at all?!)*"

I only thought it.

"Squeak. *(I've always thought this, but you really do mutter everything you're thinking out loud, beloved.)*"

Are you freaking serious? Why didn't you tell me that earlier? I slip up sometimes since I'm a dog and Lady Mary and the others don't understand what I'm saying, but *everything* just slips out of my mouth?

“Now then, Routa, we’ll conduct the ritual to send you to the past in one week. Make sure you get yourself prepared beforehand.”

“Arf, arf. *(I mean, it doesn’t matter if I’m prepared. I just have to do this.)*”

I don’t have to think about it too hard. Hecate and Len and Nahura are all here for me. We’ll manage.

Just know that the only help I can provide is being a fixed gun turret that can do nothing but shoot barf beams.

“Arwf, arwf. *(Well, I guess that means it’s time to go talk to everyone about it.)*”

Even though I’ll be able to return to my original time, it looks like my subjectivity will be taking a back seat anyway.

“Arwf! *(Now that that’s settled, let’s get moving!)*”

Outside, it’s already dark. Everyone in the mansion will be going to sleep soon.

And when night comes, that means it’s time for my walk through the forest.

The monsters living in the forest do their best never to appear before humans. Almost nobody enters it anyway, with it being so remote, but occasionally someone wanders in by mistake. For those people, Garo and the other Fen Wolves have apparently been very casually directing them back out.

“Arwf, arwf? *(They’ve got their own jobs, too, huh?)*”

And I believe they’ve been doing it since a thousand years ago. Seemingly, it was an order from the very first Fen Wolf King, who I have to say gave some tough commands. And coincidentally, that order was given a thousand years ago, at the same time as when the Demon Lord was around.

“Arwf, arwf. *(Guess coincidences happen a lot.)*”

Maybe the Fen Wolves have some kind of connection to the Demon Lord.

“Squeak. *(They likely do.)*” says Len, who had been sleeping for a while, poking her head out of my ruff. “Squeak, squeak. *(I’ve been curious about it myself. I, too, was born one thousand years ago.)*”

Right. Len was holed up in that cave for a millennium. I’m impressed anyone could shut themselves away for such a long time.

“Squeak. *(Well, it was a little lonely at times. Only mice and bats lived in that cave. I had nobody to talk to.)*”

This is getting too dark, so let’s stop this discussion. It’s really sad thinking about a dragon only having small animals as friends.

“Arf, arf. *(Actually, for having shut yourself away ever since birth, you sure do know a lot of things.)*”

Like about magic. And monsters. Also, I remember when Zenobia and I first went to that cave, you suggested we have some tea. You seemed to know a lot about human culture.

“Squeak, squeak. (High-ranking dragon children inherit a degree of knowledge from their parents. I have only faint recollections of Papa and Mama, but they still exist in memories.)”

“Arwf. (Huh. I didn’t know you could do that. Dragons are pretty great.)”

“Squeak. (They are, aren’t they? You should have more respect for me, love. Take this opportunity to acknowledge me, the ancient blue dragon Lenowym, and sing my praises.)”

I very much doubt the ancient blue dragon Lenowym’s parents would ever believe their daughter had transformed into a mouse and turned into a friendless thousand-year-old spinster who would try and court a dog.

“Arwf... (I’m sorry, Mr. and Mrs. Len. It looks like your lineage will end with her...)”

“Squeak! (It will not end! I shall have many children!)”

“Arf. (There’s only so far you can take this, though. Like, physically.)”

“Squeak. (And that is what the transformation technique is for. I swear that I will soon attain a form that is to your liking!)”

“Arf, arf. (Yeah, I doubt it. My aesthetic sense is still human, but I have the body of a dog.)”

“Squeak! (My beloved, you are too odd! Far too strange! Give up one of those things!)”

I refuse. I’m living my best life.

“Arwf, arwf? (By the way, why were you holed up in that cave for so long? You didn’t have a promise to uphold like the Fen Wolves do, did you?)”

“...Squeak? (...Come to think of it, why was I there for so long?)”

“Arwf? (Did you get senile after living for a thousand years, grandma?)”

“Squeak! (I am still too young to grow senile!)” Len, huffing angrily, bites into me.

“Arwf! (Hey, that hurts! Don’t bite me!)”

“Squeak, squeak... (Why did I shut myself in there, anyway? With my wings I

could have flown anywhere... I thought... But I felt like if I stayed, I would be able to meet someone... From what time are these memories... My time in the egg...?)”

Well, I don’t know. Seems like Len has her own stuff going on, but there’s not much we can do if she can’t remember.

With Len, now lost in thought, on my back, I race through the dark forest. Eventually, a large black shadow leaps from between the trees and comes running up alongside me.

“Grwl! (Lord Routa! You’ve appeared!)”

“Arf, arf. (Yep. Just wondering how everyone was doing.)”

I’ve been coming to see the Fen Wolves every once in a while, but not since the young lady came down with her fever.

“Grwl, grwl! (Thank you, sir! Everyone will be overjoyed to see your esteemed visage!)”

Overly dramatic as usual, but that’s how Garo always is, so there’s no point belaboring it. And I made sure to sneak into the kitchen and pilfer a few souvenirs before coming here.

Once Garo and I reach the Fen Wolf settlement, a large group of wolves surrounds us.

“““Grwl! Grwl! Grwl! (Our king! Our king! Our august, noble king!)”””

I’ve gotten used to all their fanfare, too. While they go about that, I pass the souvenirs out to everyone. As I watch them joyously wag their tails and dig into the sausages, two tiny baby wolves slip through the adults and jump out in front of me.

“Woo, woo! (Father!)”

“Woo, woo! (Come in, come in!)”

The little white and black Fen Wolves scramble around at my feet.

“Woof, woof. (Heya, Shiro, Kuro. Have you been listening to what your mother says?)”

“Woo, woo! (Every word!)”

“Woo, woo! (Shiro and Kuro have been really good!)”

“Woof, woof. (Good, good.)”

I feel like Shiro and Kuro have grown a bit since I last saw them. I’m bigger now, too, though, so maybe I can’t use that as a comparison. And even now, I’ve transformed myself to be significantly smaller. If I dispelled it, I’d be the size of a mountain again.

“If you two have been so good, then why are you still up?” says human-form Garo in a low voice. Now that she knows what I like, she’s been turning human every chance she gets to try and seduce me. And her sexy body, with that black hair and dark skin, is exactly the sort of beauty I’m into, so it’s troubling.

““Woo, woo! (We’re sorry, Mother!)””

Shiro and Kuro put their ears down and tuck their tails between their legs as Garo picks both of them up.

“And you didn’t use the proper form of greeting.”

Ah, yes. They did get it wrong, didn’t they? They said “father” instead of “king” or “Your Majesty.” I’ll have to make sure I draw the line. Garo really gets it.

“It isn’t ‘come in’; it’s ‘welcome home.’”

She doesn’t get it. She’s trying to make this settlement into the place I settle down!



““Woo, woo! (*Welcome home, Father!*)””

“A-arwf! (*N-no, stop it! Stop trying to shoehorn in this father-daughter relationship!*)”



“Wh-what?! You are going to the past?!”

Once I explain what I heard from Hecate, Garo jumps up in surprise.

“Arf, arf. (*Yeah. I don’t know how long it’ll take to come back once I go, so I came to say ‘see ya.’*)”

Also, to be perfectly honest, I’m trying to get Garo to come with me as well.

“In... In that case, please allow me to accompany you! I promise I will not be a burden!”

I thought she’d say that. She’s strong enough to hurt even the Five Demon Generals—there’s no doubt she’ll be a big help in the battle.

Still, she is the chief of the Fen Wolves. I need her to protect the peace in the forest while I’m gone. She’s so busy with her everyday patrols that I can’t possibly pull her away from that.

No, I won’t be able to take her with me after all. Only those with lots of free time can take on the duty of slaying the Demon Lord.

“Arwf, arwf. (*Thank you, Garo.*)”

After thanking her, I tell her all of this, and Garo withdraws without complaint, having understood the importance of her own position.

“Unfortunately, I will opt to remain here and wait for your return...”

“Woof, woof. (*I’m sorry. But it’ll only be a moment for you, so I don’t think you need to worry much.*)”

If I can get Hecate to use her magic to return me to the instant I left, it would only last an instant for Garo and the others. In fact, I’d rather she not make things so somber. I plan on finishing up quickly and coming back right away, after all.

“I understand! Then when you defeat the Demon Lord and return safely to us —!”

“Arwf! *(Yeah!)*”

When I return, we’ll have another barbecue at the riverbank—

“We will rally the combined might of the Fen Wolves and launch our invasion into the world of man!”

“Arwf! *(Wait no!)*”

Would you just give up on that already?!



Oh, boy. It sure took a lot of time to soothe the Fen Wolves after they all agreed with Garo and started howling like that. And I didn’t think I’d end up having to pull out the old “Silence, whelps!” shtick, either. It’s massively effective though; not only on the Fen Wolves, but also on the other monsters nearby as well—they all started groveling on the spot.

I didn’t want to be slapped in the face by the growth of my Fenrir body in a place like this...

“Arwf? *(Already daybreak, huh?)*”

As I’m going back to the mansion, feeling the earth of the forest underfoot, I see a thin pillar of smoke rising in the sky.

“Arf. *(That’s where the elves’ village is.)*”

It’s a fond memory now: Going with the elves—who had barged into the mansion to rob it—off to save their older sisters, who had been captured as slaves. After gaining freedom, they decided to rebuild their village in this forest. They like how many fruits, nuts, and berries are here, and they’d been gathering companions little by little and smoothly growing the village.

“Arwf, arwf. *(I might as well go say hello to them, too.)*”

And they might let me join them for breakfast!

As I’m on the way over, I quickly encounter the elves.

“It’s Lord Routa!”

The one who found me is Oruru, the youngest. They're a family of five sisters, with their names starting with *A*, *I*, *U*, *E*, and *O* and ending with *ruru*.

After Oruru cries out, the other elves all come swarming around me. Some of them I've never met before. They're probably their reunited fellows, scattered when their old village was burned to the ground.

"We bid you welcome, Lord Routa. Or perhaps I should say, welcome home..."

With a deep bow, the village elder and oldest of the sisters, Aruru, greets me. Also, the Fen Wolves already tried that "welcome home" trick—it won't work on me again.

"Ugh, we were a step too late..." Aruru bites her nails in frustration.

Why does everyone want me to put my roots down wherever they happen to be, anyway? Nothing good is going to come of depending on such an enormous dog. I'm just a stupid puppy whose only skill is wagging his tail as hard as possible and being friendly to everyone.

Right then, my stomach gives a loud growl. I gave all the sausages to the Fen Wolves without eating anything myself. The sound was larger than I expected it to be—I'm a little embarrassed.

Aruru giggles softly and invites me into the village. "Come, right this way! Breakfast has just been prepared."

"Arwf. *(Oh, thanks. Sorry for seeming like I came demanding it.)*"

I'm brought to a table that is very large, even for this village, and all sorts of foods are laid out in front of me.

"Arwf... *(It's only breakfast, but it seems like a feast...)*"

"Elves eat more for breakfast than for any other meal."

I see. They do say breakfast gives you energy for the rest of the day, after all. It makes logical sense. Of course, I put everything I have into eating all meals: breakfast, lunch, *and* dinner.

"Please have this, King."

Iruru, the second daughter, rips off a chunk of bread and offers it to me.

That's the stuff—I love this nutty bread. Its aroma and squishiness are to die for.

“Have this as well!”

The third daughter, Ururu, feeds me some mushroom soup. It has plenty of plump mushrooms in it; the meat-like umami spreads across my tongue.

“And this, and this!”

The fourth daughter, Eruru, brings over a whole plate of salad made from wild vegetables. Sounds great to me! Just toss it all into my mouth.

Parboiled to remove the bitterness, the vegetables nevertheless have retained their crunch as they dance across my tongue.

“King, please have this, too.”

The fifth daughter, Oruru, hands me freshly picked and peeled fruit. I can't get enough of its tart, juicy flesh.

“Arwf, arwf! *(Fwa-ha-ha-ha! Bring it oooon!)*”

Getting waited on by beautiful women and eating all this food... Is this heaven? However, Len, now awake, bites me as I get carried away with these thoughts, so I'll stop.

Maybe I'll tell the elves about the circumstances, just in case?

“Oh... Oh, but you needn't to go so far for the humans' sake, Lord Routa!” says Iruru, clinging to me.

“Arf, arf. *(Actually, I'm not doing it to save humanity or anything. I just want the young lady to get better. And if I don't defeat the Demon Lord, your village won't last very long, either.)*”

“Please don't go, King Routa!”

“Stay here with us in peace forever!”

“King Routa, all you need to do is eat and sleep. Just stay here with us.”

Ugh! What an attractive proposition. If I wasn't being raised by Lady Mary, I would agree right here and now.

With even Ururu, Iruru, and Oruru latching on to me, my determination begins to waver. Although “determination” might be too overblown a word for it.

“All of you, stop it.” Aruru, the eldest, chides her sisters. “Lord Routa, I’m terribly sorry for my sisters’ rudeness.”

At her words, the other sisters remove themselves from me.

“I’m sorry, Lord Routa.”

“You’ll come back for sure, won’t you, Your Majesty?”

“He’ll have the great witch Hecate with him. I’m sure he’ll defeat the Demon Lord and return safely.”

“We’ll wait for you forever, King Routa!”

Erm, sorry to ruin this tragic mood you have going, but I’ll probably return in an instant.

““““We’ll always be praying for your safety, Lord Routa!!””””

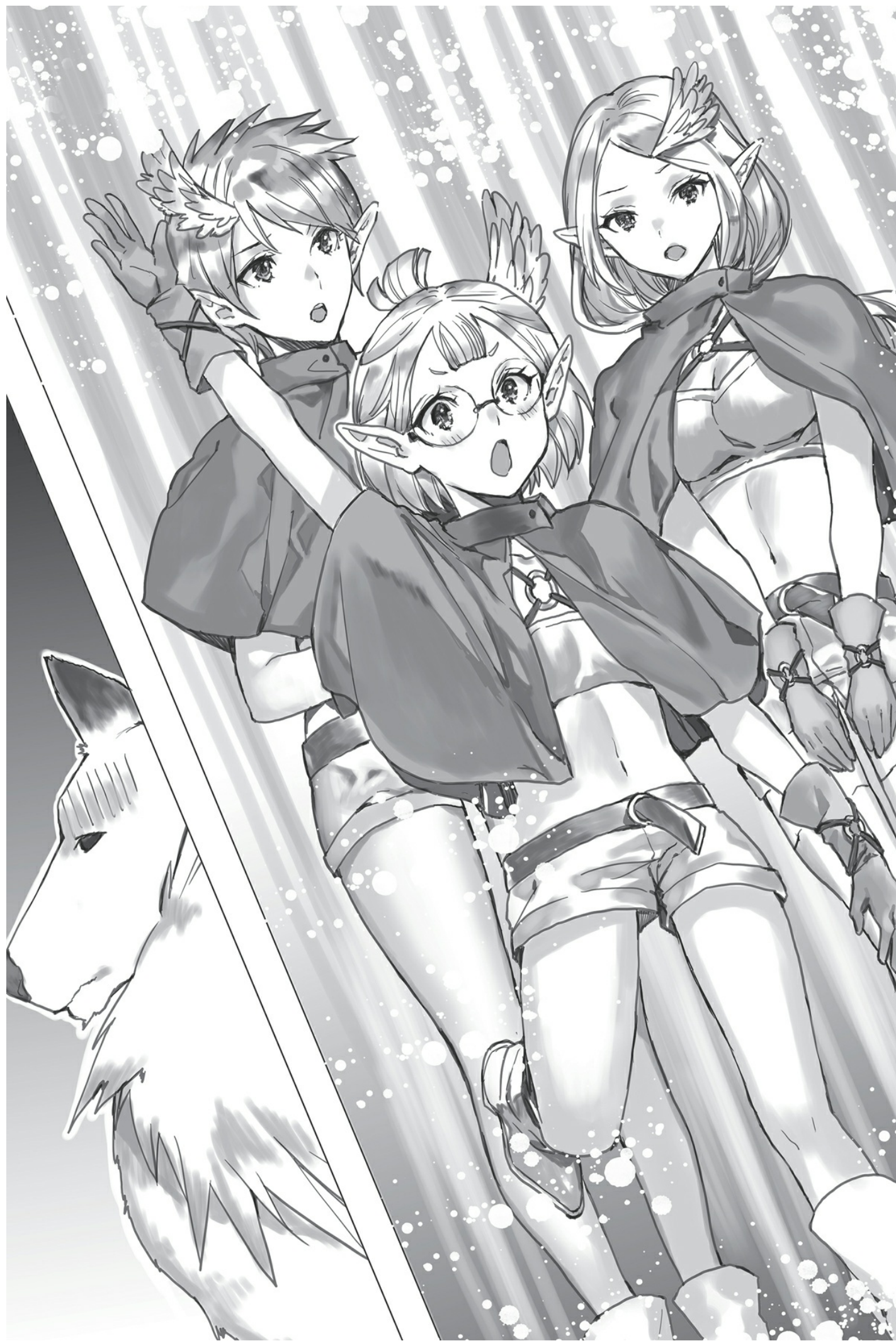
After finishing my meal, I leave the village, the elves’ cheers of encouragement sending me off.

“Arwf... *(I’ll be back in the blink of an eye, but... I’m too ashamed to say it now...)*”



“Arwf! *(Welp, I dunno!)*”

After coming out of the forest, I reach old man James’s fields. Impossibly gigantic vegetables are all crowded together, awaiting the harvest. This monstrous produce is packed full of nutrients: a collaboration between the bonemeal of skeleton soldiers and my own urine. They’re excellent in both taste and nutritional value, and there’s enough of it that even I, who goes through so much food, can’t eat it all.



When these vegetables first appeared, the old man was astonished, but now he takes care of them with practiced hands. I hope they grow big and tasty for the dinner table!

When I cross through the vegetable fields, I come to the stables where Mare, Elusive, and Grace live.

“Arwf. *(Top of the morning to ya.)*”

“Neigh. *(Oh, hello, Mister Wolf. Up early again today, are we?)*”

“Whicker. *(How admirable.)*”

Elusive and Grace, the married couple, poke their heads out from their sleeping areas and return my greeting. I’m not up early again, though—I was out playing all night and just got back.

“Arwf? *(Hm? Where’s Mare?)*”

I don’t see the considerably larger black horse anywhere.

“Neigh. *(The red-haired swordswoman took her to go for a morning ride.)*”

“Whicker. *(Mare is so full of energy, after all.)*”

Curse you, Zenobia! You’ve already made Mare into your personal possession, have you? That monster horse belongs to the Faulks family. You need to get *my* permission first, since I’m the one who did the capturing. Hmph.

Once she gets back, I’ll reproach her—though she won’t understand what I’m saying, of course.



After returning to the mansion, I head straight to the kitchen.

“Woof, woof! *(Old man! Breakfast please!)*”

When I call out from the back entrance, old man James appears.

“Out all night once again, eh? You’re such a delinquent.”

“Arwrw. *(Heh-heh-heh. Sowwy.)*”

The elves’ food is delicious, but it doesn’t feel like I’ve eaten anything until I’ve had the old man’s cooking. In fact, my stomach was totally empty by the

time I made my way back from the forest.

“Here you go. It’s a little rich to have for breakfast, but I’m sure you won’t mind.”

“Arwf! (*Course not!*)”

The old man gives me a super-thick meat sauté. Covered in a buttery sauce made from the fat and grease that came out when frying, it drives my appetite mad.

“Your friends bring me meat pretty frequently, after all—we shouldn’t have to worry about food shortages for the time being.”

The Fen Wolves are just as enamored with his cooking as I am, and when they hunt down prey, they apparently deliver it here in secret. In exchange, they have him cook half of it for them. They’ve built a give-and-take relationship for themselves.

I, meanwhile, am allowed to eat it without paying anything. It’s a take-and-take relationship.

“Arwf! (*This is great! Monster meat is great!*)”

Even the most vicious, grotesque-looking monsters quickly transform into an ultimate dish in the old man’s hands.

When I bite into the soft, but substantial meat, the juices come bursting out of it. The meat’s cross-section is red like a ruby, but it’s been heated all the way through and had the muscles cleanly stripped, so gristle doesn’t get stuck between my teeth while I’m eating.

And the deliciousness keeps on rushing at me.

“Arwf, arwf!! (*Your food is number one in the whole world, old man!!*)”

As he pets me on the back, I enjoy his cooking to my heart’s content.

“I hear Lady Mary’s illness is going to get better, too. That’s a relief. It was only a minor fever this time, but whenever she came down with one in the past, things got scary.”

Before I got the wyrmnil, the old man had to think really hard about what to

feed the young lady, because the fever prevented her from eating much.

I wonder what he'd think if he knew her illness was actually an effect of the seal on the Demon Lord. He'd probably just feel tortured by his lack of ability to do anything for her with food.

I wouldn't want him to know about it, either.

"Arf, arf. (Well, I'm gonna go take care of things real quick, so make some good food and wait for me.)"

"Oh, going already? Well, you can look forward to lunch."

"Arwf, arwf! (Of course! I plan to stuff myself with plenty of food for the journey right before I leave!)"



"Hey, it's Routa!"

Just as I decide to take a nap in the mansion, Betty the maid finds me. Her freckles are energetic and charming today as well.

"Would you like me to brush you? It's been a while."

"Arwf! (Yes, yes!)"

I roll over on the spot, and then Betty starts brushing my fur.

"Looks like it's not shedding as much as when your coat was changing."

"Arwf. (Yeah. All that fur caused a big problem, so I hope it doesn't fall out very much anymore.)"

If I hadn't found my invincible, unburnable fur shoved in the incinerator, everyone would have realized I'm not a dog. Still, that stuffed animal with my fur in it saved Zenobia, so I can't exactly say it was all for naught.

"Oh, Betty!"

"Not fair, doing it by yourself..."

Then the fluffy-haired Connie and the smooth-haired Mira arrive. I see them together a lot—maybe they work the same shifts.

"Routa, would you mind if we brushed you as well?"

“So fluffy...”

“Woof, woof! *(Of course not! Please, brush me all you like!)*”

This body is humongous, after all. Betty wouldn’t be able to do it all herself.

“Here? Do you like it here?”

“Arwrw! *(Ahh, right there, yes! More, more—brush me mooore!)*”

I’m in love with Betty’s brushing technique.

Once they all work together to brush me, I end up having even fluffier fur than I usually do. Time to let Lady Mary pet this fluffy chest hair. I’m sure she’ll be happy.

“Arwf, arwf! *(Okay, bye, Betty, Connie, and Mira! Thanks for the brushing!)*”



But just as I’m heading over to Lady Mary’s room, someone yanks me away from behind.

“Come with me.”

Oh, this grabbing technique—I know exactly who that is.

“Arf, arf. *(Zenobia, come on. Don’t make me test another sword. It’ll just break, and you’ll end up crying again.)*”

“I don’t know what you’re saying, but I can tell you’re making fun of me.”

Wh-what...?! How did Zenobia, of all people, read my mind like that...?! Of all people, Zenobia? *Zenobia...?!*

With incredible brute strength as usual, she drags my enormous frame outside. She brings me to the backyard, like always. You can see us from the old man’s kitchen window, but he’s too focused on his cooking to notice us.

“We should be able to talk here. After having talked to you for so long, some of the maids are spreading a rumor that I’ve gone mad.”

Ah. I figured she was worried about that.

“Neigh. *(Zenobia talks to me when we go for morning rides, too.)*”

A black horse, bridle still attached, gives a whinny.

“Arwf. (Oh, hello, Mare.)”

It seems they just got back from their morning ride.

“Neigh. (Good morning, Routa. Our morning ride felt very nice.)”

“Arf, arf. (Good for you. Later you can tell me what Zenobia said.)”

She’s got a surprisingly girly side to her, after all, judging by her affinity for stuffed animals and the like. I bet I’ll hear some interesting stuff.

“Neigh. (I cannot. It is a secret between women.)”

Come to think of it, Mare is a girl, isn’t she? At some point she must have formed a strong attachment to Zenobia.

“...I heard everything from Lady Hecate.”

Oh? So she’s already heard what we talked about yesterday, huh?

“It’s such a spectacular story that my mind can’t fully comprehend it, but I do know you’ve been tasked with a crucial role in it.”

Well, I don’t really get it myself. Like, if I change the past, what will happen to the future? Will we have parallel universes, or will it cause a time paradox, or what? Anyway, I don’t know what parallel universes or time paradoxes even are. I was just firing off some vocabulary I happen to know. Never seek knowledge from a dog.

“I had thought about going with you.”

Seriously? I’d be glad to take you along with me. I’m sure Gorillanobia’s combat strength would be a big help.

“But to be frank, compared to you, I would be nothing but a hindrance.”

That’s not true. You’re super-dependable. Come on, give a helpless puppy a hand, would ya?

“It seems like you understand, too—why I’m staying on the bench for this one.”

No, I don’t. You’d be way better *off* the bench. Help me. Please, help me!

“Yeah. You’re right—I wouldn’t help you very much. So instead, I will be a

sword to protect Lady Mary while you're gone."

Ah. She's not understanding me at all. She and I can never seem to have an actual conversation when it's important.

"So you don't have to worry about that when you go."

Actually, now I'm *more* worried than I would have been. I was planning on adding you to the team I'm bringing. You've got nothing to do anyway, and you perfectly fit all the requirements to be chosen! You and I are the only ones who don't do any work around here, after all.

After Zenobia sees me off with a nice smile, I go back inside the mansion in disappointment.





Now deflated by the knowledge that Zenobia would not be coming with me, I feel like my fur has withered a bit. I'll have to get Lady Mary to pet me. That'll have me right back to my normal, energetic self.

"Arwf! (Without further ado—Lady Maryyy!)"

Meaning to go say good morning to my lady, I trot down the hallway. I've learned that the nature of her illness has to do with the burden of the Demon Lord's seal, but according to Hecate, the medicine will bring her fever down for a while. It seems like it'll be all right for her to lead her normal life in the meantime.

I'm glad I didn't have to see her suffering, but that, too, turns out to be on a time limit. Once Hecate finishes the spell to send us to the past, I'll have to go and defeat the Demon Lord.

"Arwf, arwf? (Seriously, why does an adorable puppy dog like me have to go slay the Demon Lord, of all things?)"

Isn't this where Allie, the Hero, should be coming in? She may have lost her holy sword, but in terms of combat power she's sure to grow into an ally on Zenobia's level. Unfortunately, I don't know where she is right now.

Having overcome her complex about being the Hero, she's apparently been directing her efforts into safeguarding docile monsters who don't harm humans and exposing the shady smugglers who go after them, all so that she can repent for her crimes thus far. She's flitting all over the world—it would be too difficult to search her out.

"Arwww... (It looks like we're really the only ones who will be going...)"

Now I'm kind of anxious. I need to have the young lady pamper me to get rid of this unease. I walk up to the door of her room just as Toa is exiting with a cart of empty plates and utensils.

"Arwf, arwf? (Oh, it's Miranda and Toa?)"

"Please excuse us, Lady Mary."

Both of them give beautiful bows, with their backs stretched out, and close

the door.

“I’m glad she ate all her food,” says Toa.

“Yes. One wouldn’t believe she was having such a hard time until yesterday. I will honestly need to thank Lady Hecate. Toa, thank you for keeping an eye on her last night as well.”

“Not at all—I’m her servant, so it’s my job! But you came to help me even though you have to help the master with his work...”

“It’s fine. This was partly so I could check on how you were getting along.”

“E-EEK...! P-please don’t judge me too harshly...!”

“I’m only kidding. Personally, I’m glad I had you stay at her side. Until just a little while ago, you weren’t quite there yet in my eyes—but at this point, you’re a full-fledged member of the serving staff. I’m proud to have been the one who taught you.”

I’m proud, too—as the one who has been watching her do all the work. Mm-hmm!

“Oh, Routa!”

Whoops. Looks like they spotted me. Which is only natural considering there’s no hiding place big enough for my huge body.

“Routa, did you come to check on Lady Mary, too?” asks Toa, looking up at me and scratching me under the chin.

“Woof, woof! *(Yep! Checkin’ in! Well, it’s more like I want her to pet me a lot.)*”

“She seemed to be bored, so play with her, all right?”

“But quietly, so you don’t cause a stir.”

“Arwf! *(Oh, just leave that to me!)*”

I’ll even throw in a bed-sharing service and get her to fall asleep. Although you could call that me just wanting to take a nap.

After parting with Miranda and Toa, I enter Lady Mary’s room.

“Woof, woof! (Lady Maryyy! Your adorable Routa has come running for you! Are you well, my lady?)”

I open the door to see Lady Mary, sitting up in bed.

“.....”

But her face isn't directed at me.

“Arf? (Huh? Lady Mary? It's your beloved Routa.)”

I go over to the other side of the bed to gaze upon her esteemed visage, but she quickly turns the other way again.

“A-arwf? (L-Lady Mary? Wh-why won't you look at me?)”

Did I do something to make you angry?!

“...Routa, where did you go yesterday?”

“A-arwf. (Ahh, oh no, oh no... She finally found out about me staying out all night...)”

She never noticed because I always get back into bed before she wakes up, but I took too many detours today. It's not my fault—all the food I ate was just too good to pass up!

“You didn't sleep with me. I don't even know you anymore, Routa!”

The way she puffs out her cheeks in anger is so adorable. Wait, no. I have to get her to forgive me, and fast!

“Whine, whine! (I'm sorry! I'm sorry, Lady Mary!)”

Events forced me out of the room yesterday, and I had things to do in the forest. I thought she fell asleep right after that, but it seems she had trouble dozing off. She was sleeping the whole time she had that fever, after all. With it going down and her energy returning, it makes sense she wouldn't be able to go to sleep.

“Whine, whine! (Lady Mary, please don't be angry!)”

I start making cries, walking back and forth between both sides of the bed, trying to see my lady's face.

“.....”

“Whine, whine! (Nooo! Please don’t be mad at me! I won’t do it again, I promise!)”

“...Are you sorry?”

“Woof! (Yes, deeply sorry! Deeper than the ocean!)”

“Oh, you’re good at answering me, if nothing else.” She pulls on my cheeks, stretching them out. “I forgive you.”

“Arwf! (Yay! You’re as kind as the Holy Mother herself!)”

I show my happiness at the young lady’s bigheartedness by wagging my tail.

“Okay, now that we’ve made up, shall we go?”

“Arf? (Huh? Go where?)”

Lady Mary takes off her pajamas and changes into clothing that’s easier to move around in.

If you’re going to change, should I call the maids for you?

But it didn’t require that, and after she finishes getting quickly changed, she picks up a fur-lined hat.

“We’re going out!”

“Arwf?! (Huh?!)”

But you’re still convalescing, and it’s cold outside, and I don’t think the maids would want you to do that. Miranda is sure to say something like *“I see. If you’ve regained your energy, then why don’t you finish all the homework that’s been piling up?”*

“I feel healthy again, but everyone is saying that I should still be sleeping!”

“Arwf. (Well, I’m sure they are.)”

In fact, I’m saying it, too. At a glance, you seem to be hale and hearty again, but no matter how amazing Hecate’s medicine is, shouldn’t you stay in bed at least another day?

“So we’re going to sneak out.”

“Arwf?! (*Whaaat?!!*)”

Turns out this is an unauthorized outing.

“Okay, Routa, help me.”

You want me to aid in your escape...?! I—I’m Routa, guard dog of justice! I can’t make an exception, even for you—I can’t help you do something so bad! I’m disappointed in you! I’m going to report this to the maids immediately!

“You promised me you wouldn’t let me feel lonely anymore, right?”

“Arwf...?! (*Urk... Erm, well, I...?!!*)”

It was something I said the first time the young lady had had a fever after I came to the mansion.

“*Routa... Don’t leave me again...*”

My answer to her was “Okay, okay, I won’t leave you again.”

“Arf! (*I did promise! Yes!*)”

“You promised, but how many times have you gone out since then without telling me?”

“Arwf... (*Umm... One, two, three, four... I can’t count them all...*)”

It appears all my nighttime outings that I thought hadn’t been noticed have been entirely noticed. I’ve enjoyed myself on my own, too, while she was studying, like when I went to the Royal Capital. Honestly, I feel awful.

“You have to listen to at least one of my wishes, okay?”

“...Arf. (*...Yes, gladly.*)”

As Lady Mary gives a sweet smile and opens the window, I wag my tail—my white flag of surrender.



“Arwf... (*Should we be doing this? If someone finds us, we’re in for a good scolding...*)”

I really don’t want Miranda getting angry at me, you know.

“Routa! The breeze feels really nice, doesn’t it?”

Riding on my back, the young lady is in a good mood.

“Arwf. (Well, whatever. She seems to be having fun.)”

I’ll gladly accept Miranda’s scolding. From a certain point of view, a beautiful maid scolding me is practically a trope at this point: It’s like a reward.

“I’m just as excited as that other time!”

Oh, that’s right—this isn’t the first time we’ve fled the mansion like this, is it? The other time was before I got very big, and we walked side by side toward the lake.

“But we got tired around here and went back, huh?”

“Arf, arf. (Yeah, we did.)”

I spot the tree Lady Mary had taken a nap under. She was so tired she fell asleep here. And then I sensed monsters, so I mustered my courage and drove them away—and I ended up mowing them down with my barf beam. That was when I realized I wasn’t even a wolf, wasn’t it?

I feel like it took us a pretty long time to get this far back then, but it hasn’t even been a few minutes with my current legs. We’ll reach the lake in no time at all.

“It really brings me back!”

“Arwf. (Me too.)”

Lady Mary holds on to her hat as I run, the wind parting around us. Her eyes are narrowed, and not because the wind is strong, but because she’s reminiscing on the past.

“Hey, Routa?”

“Arwf? (Yes, Lady Mary?)”

“...Hmm. No, I’ll tell you later.”

“Arwf? (Huh? Oh, tell me! Now I’m curious!)”

“Hee-hee. Later— I’ll tell you later.”

“Arwf. (Rats.)”

Lady Mary just keeps smiling mischievously.

And so, with her on my back, and of course with me being careful not to wobble her around even a little, we arrive at the lake.

“It feels like so long since we last came here.”

The last time I came here with Lady Mary was when Elizabeth, also known as Drills, came to visit her. They ended up doing sketches by the lake, and Lady Mary drew us all with the lake in the background.

Hers was so abstract I couldn’t understand it, but according to Drills, she’s a master artist. I wonder how that picture is being received, now that it’s been brought to the Royal Capital.

“Wow, it’s cold! I don’t think we can play in it.”

“Arwf. *(Winter is almost here, after all.)*”

I swat at the water a little with my front paw, and I shudder in spite of myself at how chilly it is.

“Aha-ha! You just shivered!”

“Arf? *(Huh? You liked that? I can do it again, if you want.)*”

I put my paw in again and shiver. The young lady seems to find it hysterical and bursts out laughing.

“Routa, let’s sit down here and take a break. You’re tired from running, right?”

“Arwf. *(Nope, not at all.)*”

Lady Mary adds basically no weight, and at night, I’ve run over ten times this distance to where Garo and the others live.

“Arf, arf. *(But I do have an important duty as Lady Mary’s backrest. And only big dogs get the privilege of having their owners rest against them.)*”

With how big I am, I’m more than a backrest—I can easily be a sofa or a bed, too. Watch as I practically engulf her in my soft, fluffy fur.

“Routa, you’re really warm.”

“Arwrw. (Heh-heh-heh. Aren’t I, though?)”

With me lying on my belly, the young lady nestles her back against my side. My long fur almost completely hides her. Even the chill coming off the cold lake won’t get to her like this.

“It’s so nice and warm in here.”

“Arf, arf? (You just warm yourself up in there, all right?)”

Her lower half is probably warm from riding on my back, but the wind blowing at her was probably cold. Her nose is a little red.

“Hee-hee. Routa, you have snot coming out of your nose.”

“Arwf? (Huh?)”

Apparently, I’m cold, too. Lady Mary uses a handkerchief to clean off my nose. She’s so kind.

“Arwf... (And I guess I’ll have to leave this kind young lady for a little while...)”

From their point of view, I’ll only be gone a moment, but subjectively, I have no idea how long it’ll take me to defeat the Demon Lord.

Ahh, no, no. Don’t put the fate of the world in an adorable pet’s paws!

“...Routa? Is something the matter? You don’t seem very cheerful today.”

“Arwf? (Is that so? You’re so good at being considerate, you know that?)”

Is her whole body just made out of pure consideration? She reaches her hands out to my face and kneads my cheeks around. “Did something bad happen?”

“Arf... (Well, I suppose you could call it that...)”

It’s bad, but it’s something I have to do anyway.

“If something bad happened, I think you should spit it out.”

I’d like to say that to you, Lady Mary. Having lost your mother at a young age and living so deep in the forest with no real friends, you must be going through some stuff.

“I’ve been happy ever since you came here, Routa. There is nothing bad I

need to spit out. But I don't like it when you look like you're struggling."

"Arwf... (Lady Mary...)"

What...a kindhearted child. An angel—no, a goddess—no, even kinder than that. She's filled with so much more compassion than that stupid goddess that reincarnated me as Fenrir.

"Okay, go ahead. You can talk to me about anything."

She stretches out my cheeks some more.

"Arf. (Well, you won't understand what I'm saying anyway, so I guess I'll just blurt it all out.)"

Lady Mary is sharp enough to figure out what I'm feeling, but even she won't understand the actual words. The barrier between races is perfect for whining and complaining.

"Arf, arf. (Well... She's telling me I have to go back to the past and defeat the Demon Lord, but honestly, I'm kind of scared.)"

I'm just a pet in this life, formerly corporate livestock in my past life. Maybe I could defeat the Demon Lord's generals with this high-spec Fenrir body, but their boss? I'm worried my power won't work on him.

Even if I was able to take him down, will I really be able to return to the present? The future won't be different when I come back—Lady Mary won't be gone, will she?

There's no end of things to think about. I've been purposely not thinking about any of them since I can't do anything about them, but they form into words and exit through my mouth.

Well, I'm an enormous pathetic coward, if I do say so myself. But that's just who I am.

"Arwf. (And that's the long and short of it.)"

Lady Mary was right—now that I've said it, I feel a little better. What she says is never wrong, is it? She's a paragon of pet owners—she even takes care of their hearts.

“I see. That must be rough...” says the young lady.

She didn’t understand what I said, but she said that with perfect timing. I should have expected as much. We’re totally in sync.

“Routa, you’re going to defeat the Demon Lord...”

“Arwf, arwf. *(Yeah, that’s right. I’m going to— Wait, what?)*”

Huh? How did she know that?

She may be sharp, but even *she* couldn’t have understood what I was talking about. She can’t understand my words.

“Routa...”

“Arf? *(Yes?)*”

“I’m sorry.”

“Arf? *(Huh? About what?)*”

“I, well... I can understand what you’re saying.”

“.....Arf? *(.....What?)*”

Silence continues between us.

Wait. Wait, wait, wait, wait. That can’t be.

Why, that’s impossible.

Of course, it is! If she can understand what I’m saying, that would mean she heard all of those perverted licky-licky statements I’ve made in the past, wouldn’t it?

That can’t be. Definitely not. No sir.

“A-arwooooooooooooo!! *(S-say it ain’t so, Lady Mary!!)*”

I thought nobody at the mansion could understand what I’m saying, and I said all sorts of crazy things with them around! Like how I want to lick them, and rub against them, and all that stuff about nice angles!

You’re saying my private enjoyment afforded me by my position as a pet has been out in the open...?!

“Arwoooo! (Kill me! Just kill me now!)”

I’m so embarrassed that I start rolling around on the ground.

“Ahh, wait, Rوتا. It’s okay. I’m the only one who can understand you. Nobody else in the mansion has heard any of that.”

“Arwoo! Arwoooooooooo! (But you’re the one I wanted to understand all of that the least!)”

Wait, would that mean she knows all about my true identity, too?

“Yes, I knew from the start that you aren’t a dog.”

“Arwoooooooooo! (Nooooooooooooooooo!)”

I tried so hard to pretend I’m a dog, but Lady Mary knew everything from the start?

“Do you remember how I fell asleep the first time we snuck out of the mansion, Rوتا?”

Yes, you were napping under that tree we came across on the way, right?

“I was actually awake back then. I knew you weren’t a dog, but I had no idea you were a monster powerful enough to put a hole that big in the forest.”

“...Arwww... (...So you even knew that...)”

Why, that means she knows absolutely everything...

Wait, wouldn’t that also mean she knew I was a really dangerous monster, but still treated me the same? Who ever heard of a wolf with such an ugly face who can barf up laser beams? I’ve got to be terrifying.

And yet she still pretended she didn’t know and loved me all the same.

“I wasn’t scared at all, even though I knew how strong you were.”

“...Arwf? (...Really?)”

“Yes! Because I knew you were also a really nice puppy.”

Lady Mary’s smile is radiant. How is it possible I landed such a good master?

“Are you calm now?”

“Arf... (Yes. I’m sorry, that was embarrassing...)”

She pets me encouragingly, and I finally regain my composure.

“Arf, arf. (But that was mean of you, Lady Mary. You should have told me sooner.)”

No wonder we were able to communicate as well as we did. If I’d known about this from the start, I wouldn’t have made all those lascivious comments.

“Hee-hee. I’m sorry. I didn’t have a chance to tell you, and you were really funny, so...”

Oh, come on. You just like teasing me. I’m so embarrassed I want to die! I feel like rolling around again.

“Anyway... I guess it’s true, what I was told before Mother passed away.”

Lady Mary’s mother, Marianna, carried the burden of the Demon Lord’s seal herself before passing it on to her. And when her mother’s body reached its limit, when she passed the role on to her daughter, she’d apparently told her all about the seal.

“Half of me didn’t believe it. Or rather, I didn’t want to believe it—that the fairy tales I loved so much were lies.”

The tales of the hero Routa’s adventure with his companions to defeat the Demon Lord was one of the mistress’s favorite stories. She’s read it out loud to me many times.

It’s true that the events that transpired a thousand years ago were completely different. They couldn’t defeat the Demon Lord, and in fact, they had their hands full just sealing him away. And that seal drained the caster’s life, slowly weakening over the course of being inherited by generation after generation, and now it was ready to break.

“But it was all true.”

“...Arwf. (...Lady Mary...)”

“Routa?”

“Arf? (Yes?)”

“Thank you.”

“Arwf? (*Huh?*)”

Was any of this something she should be thanking me for? I just exposed all sorts of terrible stuff to her. I only explained about the Demon Lord because I thought she wouldn’t understand me. But it wasn’t something I was supposed to tell her about. And now I’ve gone and made her anxious for no reason.

If possible, I never would have wanted her to know about this.

“Routa, you’ve been saving all kinds of people without anyone knowing, haven’t you? You even beat all five of the Demon Lord’s generals from the story.”

No, I’m not that incredible. They were in the way of my life as a pet, so I didn’t have much choice. I wasn’t going in wanting to save anyone to begin with. I’m extremely self-centered and reliant upon others.

“Thank you, Routa. I’m sure that if you weren’t here, we would have been in a lot more trouble.”

Really? Hecate’s here, so I think you would have been fine. So don’t think you owe me anything. I’m just a cute pet whose only skill is making sure you have fun. I’d be happy if you treated me the same as always.

“...Routa, I bet you’ll be like that forever.”

“Arwf. (*That’s right! I still get carried away super-easily.*)”

“Always facing big problems like they’re nothing... You’ve probably gone through so many scary and painful experiences, but you still saved everyone and never even told anyone...”

No, no, it’s not that big a deal. With this Fenrir body, everything is an easy win. I’m basically a coward, so if I didn’t have this overpowered body, I would have tucked my tail and ran away.

“But that doesn’t mean you weren’t still scared, right?”

“Arwf... (*Well, I guess not...*)”

Speaking bluntly, I was as scared as anyone would be. I could horse around a

bit, since Len and Nahura were with me, but alone, I would have been beside myself with fear.

“That’s why I’m thanking you. And I’m sorry I never knew.”

“Arf, arf. (*That’s not it, Lady Mary.*)”

I still never did anything except for my own sake.

I never wanted her to know because my regular life has her in it. Being a pet dog to a kindhearted young lady like her is the number-one happiest situation for me.

I didn’t endure anything and fight for your sake or anyone else’s. In fact, I should be thanking *you* for raising a strange monster who eats so much, is so stupidly large, and can even barf beams out of his mouth.

“Routa...”

No, seriously, thank you.

No matter how you think about it, there are no dogs like me. Lady Mary pretended not to know about my true identity when she actually did, but this means the other people in the mansion haven’t noticed yet.

How blind to the truth can they be? They’ve all got it real bad. Maybe it would be better to have Hecate look at them, but it’s more convenient for me this way, so please stay blind forever.

I kind of wish Lady Mary’s pretty blue eyes would be just as blind. She forgave me, but the truth that she understood all my words is too great a blow to bear.

As she stares at me with those blue eyes of hers, she suddenly says, “Routa, you don’t have to go.”

Do you mean, I don’t have to go to the past?

I accidentally told her the Demon Lord’s seal is about to expire, so she knows exactly what situation we’re in. If it expires, Lady Mary will, too, and the resurrected Demon Lord will destroy the world.

“You’ve been trying so hard this whole time, haven’t you?”

I don’t feel like I’ve been trying hard whatsoever, but I certainly don’t want to

fight.

“I’ve been letting you do everything, without knowing anything myself. I don’t want to make you bear the end of it as well...”

“Arwf... *(Lady Mary...)*”

“I... Well, I don’t want to die. I want to live longer and play with you. I want to live with Father and everyone in the mansion forever. I want to talk to Elizabeth more, and I even want to try going to school in the Royal Capital, too. But... But I don’t want you to have to go through such danger because of me!”

Tears appear in her eyes as she looks up at me.

As they start to fall from her face, I give them a lick.

I did it! My first ever lick!

Wait, no.

I return Lady Mary’s gaze and respond, “Arf, arf. *(Lady Mary, like I said, I’m not going to go defeat the Demon Lord to save the world.)*”

Furthermore, I’m not doing it for your sake, either.

It’s all for me.

I’m going to slay the Demon Lord because he’ll prevent me from enjoying my life as a pet. That’s all there is to it.

And it’s been over half a year since reincarnating here. I plan on enjoying this pet life for half a century—I’m not about to let it end when it’s just begun!

“Woof, woof. *(So there isn’t a single thing you need to worry about.)*”

“Routa...”

“Arf, arf. *(Anyway, I’ll be nice and quick about it and come back. So there’s something else, besides ‘thank you’ or ‘I’m sorry’, that I want you to say.)*”

“.....”

Lady Mary wipes the corners of her eyes, sniffles a little through her reddened nose, and then gives me an amazing smile.

“I’ll be waiting for you, Routa, so come back home soon.”

“Woof! (Will do! It won’t even take a second, I promise!)”



Even so, Hecate's preparations weren't finished immediately, but it was only a few nights later that we seemed prepared to take off for the past.

"Arf, arf... (This is lame... Here I thought I'd look pretty cool when I embarked. But after all that, I just played with the young lady as usual, and ate food, and lay around...)"

"Meow! (But it's good you made one last memory!)"

"Woof, woof! (It's not the last one! The memory making will continue! And anyway, it'll take me a few seconds at most to take out that Demon Lord or what have you!)"

"Squeak, squeak. (Indeed—I would expect nothing less from my beloved. I will be watching your success from the front row.)"

"Mew! (Aw, we should have brought candy!)"

"Arwf? (Hey, uh, you two know what we're going to be doing, right?)"

You're fighting alongside me. Why are you acting like I'll be doing everything by myself? Once the battle starts, I am absolutely without a doubt getting you two wrapped up in it...

My mind firmly made up, I wait until Lady Mary is fast asleep, then quietly slip out of bed.

"Routa..."

Her hands grope the air, searching for my warmth. I put a pillow there to stand in for it, and she hugs it, seeming relieved.

"Arwf. (Anyway, let's go.)"

No need for any parting words here. Once I defeat the Demon Lord and come back, I'll get right back into bed with you and we'll go back to our normal life.

“Heading out?”

“Arwrwf?! (*Hu-whaaa?!!*)”

Suddenly a voice comes to me from behind—it’s Zenobia.

“Arwf. (*Geez, don’t surprise me like that.*)”

You made me make a weird sound.

Zenobia is a master of hiding her presence, after all. She can even get behind Garo, who lives out in the wild. Plus, she’s superfast. In fact, she seems better suited to being a thief than a swordswoman.

Actually, given her tragic sense of direction, that wouldn’t work... She’d get lost as soon as she went out on an expedition.

“Leave Lady Mary and the others in the mansion to me. I’ll be sure to protect them while you’re gone.”

“Arf, arf. (*Well, with Hecate’s space-time magic, it’ll probably only seem like an instant to you before I get back.*)”

But I like your spirit. They’re in your hands, Zenobia. Do that private security guard job well, y’hear? It’s a great chance to return that NEET label to the store.

Zenobia waves to me as we part ways, and I go outside the mansion.

“Mew. (*First things first—I’ll warp us to the place Lady Hecate told me about.*)”

The scenery shifts as Nahura teleports us. We land right next to a rocky cliffside with a big full moon in the distance.

“Arwf. (*I haven’t been here in a while.*)”

Feels like I’ve been visiting a lot of nostalgic places lately. This is where I met Garo and the other Fen Wolves, when I was so uneasy that I started howling. I was so surprised when it happened, I think I remember accidentally peeing myself.

“Squeak. (*I thought that was what happened when you met me.*)”

Actually, you’re wrong. That was when I *completely pissed* myself. A dog peeing himself is cute. But we’re talking full-stream here.

“Squeak, squeak. (I was surprised, as I had never thought such a splendid male that would force his way into my nest and mark his territory could exist.)”

You were just misunderstanding me, actually. Again, it was just an accident.

“Squeak... (Come to think of it, that was the very moment I fell madly in love with you...)”

Because I had a moment of incontinence? *That’s* why you fell in love with me?

I cringe as Len puts a paw to her cheek in embarrassment and starts squealing and twisting.

I push through the foliage and reach the overhang to find a big group of my forest friends there waiting for me. The Fen Wolves are foremost among them, but they’re joined by monsters I brought back from the Royal Capital, as well as the elves.

“Grwl! (King Routa! If we can do naught else, please, allow us to see you off!)”

“Grwl! Grwl! Grwl! (Our king! Our king! May you fare well!)”

At Garo’s command, the Fen Wolves line up and divide, making a path for me.

“Arwf... (You’re really embarrassing me with the heroic send-off...)”

Considering I’m pretty asocial, I don’t do well with people who shower me with attention.

I walk between the two lines of Fen Wolves, heading for the cliffside.

“King Routa! Please be careful!”

“Here, have this bread—everyone in the village helped make it!”

“And here’s some soup!”

“And some boiled wild vegetables!”

“Also some dried fruits!”

The elves push their way through and forcibly give me all sorts of souvenirs.

“Arwf...! (Hey! Wait, I can’t hold that much...!)”

“Meow? (It’s okay. I can use spatial magic to store them away once we get there, so why not just accept them for now?)”

“Squeak. (Indeed. You must properly accept their consideration for you.)”

I mean, I *am* grateful, but why are the two of you acting so self-important?

The bread goes on top of my head, the soup-laden pot hangs out my mouth, and the various other items are fastened all over my body.

“Arwf! (What the heck is this...? I’m like a Christmas tree, complete with decorations!)”

Thanks to the full moon, I’m positively glowing—they all really do look like ornaments.

“Good of you to come, Routa. And I’m glad you did... Pfft...”

“Arwf... (Sure, laugh it up, Hecate.)”

I must look so ridiculous right now. Damn it! I remember the first time I came to this cliff. I was a spectacle then, too, with all the sausages hanging around my neck. I’m even more opulent than I was that day. Everything’s so reflective. You could see me from miles away. And what, I’m supposed to be happy about it?

Hecate isn’t the only one waiting for me at the edge of the cliff.

“We’re getting up early again tomorrow, you know... You’d better take care of this quickly!”

“Mircalla, for a being of the night, you sure have grown accustomed to a morning-centric lifestyle...”

It’s Carmilla and Lich, formerly of the Five Demon Generals, now working at the mansion as servants. Of course, right now they’re Mircalla the maid and Richmond the butler. They’ve gotten way too used to their lives as servants at home—makes you doubt they were ever even generals of the Demon Lord’s army in the first place.

“...So tired... Nothing matters...”

“I swear. Today was my sharpening day, and that doesn’t come around very often—I was on cloud nine. What do you need from me?”

The voices coming in as thoughts are from the stone statue that would have otherwise been adorning the mansion’s gate and the knife the old man has

taken a shine to.

These two are formerly demon generals as well, but they were sealed away in a stone statue and a knife. There's nothing of their former selves left now. They both seem extremely satisfied with their current lives, though. Are you guys seriously okay with this setup?

"Squeal, squeal. *(It hath been some time, my lifelong companion.)*"

The last of the generals is Behemoth. She's a weirdo—she willingly gave up her power to Hecate—but the reason, according to her, is that she has fallen madly in love with me. But I'm not a furry! I don't care if I'm popular with animals!

"Squeal, squeal? *(Hast thou been lonely in mine absence?)*"

"Arwf. *(Not at all.)*" In fact, I almost forgot about you.

"Squeal, squeal! *(Thy cruel words tuggeth at mine heartstrings all the same!)*"

Keep your heartstrings to yourself. She's too strong. I could say literally anything, and she'd take it as favorable.

"Arf, arf. *(She's so strong she might steal your position, Len.)*"

"Squeak! *(Hmph. Say what you will. For it is I who will be accompanying you on your journey! The lowly Nahura should sit quietly behind as well, in fact!)*"

"Meow! *(Lowly Nahura? That's rude of you in several ways! Lady Len, you're awful!)*"

Oh, great. It looks like we'll be the Four Stooges featuring Behemoth rather than the Three Stooges once we return. They're snatching up the real estate on my back pretty quickly...

"These five will be the support pillars for the magic circle," says Hecate, gripping her staff.

"Arwf? *(What? You mean they'll be sacrifices?)*"

Mircalla and the others cringe. I was mostly joking, but Mircalla must really think of Hecate as someone who might actually do that.

"Well, that would have worked, too, but..."

Please stop it—for them. Mircalla is crying now!

“I used their mana to construct this magic circle, after all. I’m only using them as catalysts who happen to have higher compatibility. It won’t put too much of a burden on them.”

Mircalla and Richmond are visibly relieved when they hear that. What on earth did Hecate even do to them?

“Now, I’ll have you all go to the magic circle’s support pillars.”

Hecate waves her staff, and a white light appears at the former generals’ feet. They’re probably being sent off to where the magic circle’s support pillars are, spread throughout the forest.

Before warping away, Mircalla glares at me and says, “Err, well. What I want to say is, ever since we met you, we’ve had it pretty rough, but I kind of like my life now. I’m not going to thank you, but I won’t hold a grudge, either. Do your best not to let the Demon Lord kill you.”

“Ho-ho-ho. I feel the same way as Mircalla. I still can’t remember much about the Demon Lord—fog clouds my memories—but I am currently a butler of the Faulks family. I will at least pray for your safety.”

After Mircalla, Richmond poses like he’s praying, and the two of them disappear.

“You allowed me to sleep for eternity... You have my thanks...”

“I very much appreciate your preparing the greatest user I have ever had!”

Gigas and Belgor also thank me before vanishing.

“Squeal, squeal! (I shall await thee forever. Promise me thou shalt return safely, my lifelong companion!)”

I’m not your lifelong companion, but thanks. I feel like I could probably be friends with you—but only friends.

A few moments after Behemoth, the last one, disappears, pillars of light erupt from all over the forest.

“All right, Rوتا. Are you mentally prepared?”

“Arwf, arwf. (I was never mentally prepared, but anyway, let’s go.)”

“And since I can’t go with you, please ask Nahura to be your guide.”

“Arwf?! (Huh?! Wait, you never told me that!)”

You didn’t think you could have given me any more warning?! If even *you* aren’t coming, that means you’re leaving the fate of the world in the hands of the Three Stooges over here!

Seriously? Are you okay with that?! Not to brag, but I’m a first-class blunderer! We’re totally useless, and now the world will be destroyed! We’re all doomed!

“I’m sorry. I don’t know what would happen if my present self were to meet my past self, and I’d like to eliminate as many fears as possible.”

You don’t feel like sending us by ourselves is an even bigger fear?! Now that I know our guardian Hecate won’t be coming with us, I immediately get anxious.

What’s that? The only companions I can rely on are a mouse and a cat? There’s almost nobody here to keep me safe!

“Squeak! (I am not a mouse! I am the ancient blue dragon Lenowyrn!)”

“Meow! (And I’m Nahura the homunculus, product of alchemical arts!)”

Oh, yeah, that’s right.

It’s just that you guys almost never use your abilities. Nahura’s spatial magic is good to have on hand, but from there it’s just burgling the kitchen. Which doesn’t have anything to do with combat abilities.

And Len literally does nothing but eat and sleep.

“Squeak! (Because I am not on a battlefield! Pray keep your eyes peeled and watch me at work!)”

“Meow! (And Lady Hecate told me everything about the past! You can trust me to lead us where we need to go!)”

Whoa, this doesn’t happen often—these two are positively brimming with enthusiasm.

“Woof, woof! (All right. If you insist, then show me the two of you actually

helping for once!)”

And let me hide behind you so I can travel in safety!

“Routa, everything you think really does show on your face, doesn’t it?”

Huh? Wait, my ulterior motives are leaking again?

Aw, shucks. Nah, even *I’m* going to join in this time. Ha-ha-ha. I wasn’t just musing on the hope that Len and Nahura defeat the Demon Lord for me. Ha-ha-ha.

“.....”

Okay, I was. I’m sorry.

Just as I start to feel the pain of Hecate’s wordless pressure, it strikes me that she wasn’t thinking about that. Her eyes are focused on my collar.

“Routa, no matter what you have to do, make sure you don’t lose that collar.”

“Arf? (The collar? Well, you gave it to me as a gift, so I’ll certainly treat it well, but why?)”

Hecate had gone through the trouble of making this for me because I wanted to masquerade as a dog. It’s an excellent item, really—it freely retracts and expands without breaking, no matter how big I get.

Oh, but I do take it off and have it cleaned when I take a bath, so it’s not smelly or anything, got it?

“It’s a tool for absorbing your mana and storing it up. After almost half a year, it’s almost filled up completely.”

“Squeak. (So that is what it is? I knew it was some manner of magical item.)”

Come to think of it, Len was suspicious of Hecate’s collar. I never really minded it—but it was absorbing my mana, huh? I had no idea.

“That’s because you have an abnormal amount of mana. It absorbs little by little, but it’s absorbed so much now that it would have drained any monster completely dry.”

That’s terrifying! It makes sense Len would sense something and be cautious about it.

“You’ll need that mana to return to this time. The mana buildup, plus the mana from the Five Demon Generals, will send you to the past, but it’s highly likely you won’t have access to it coming back.”

Hecate’s right. Still, will my mana alone be enough?

“An enormous amount of mana is needed to send you from the future to the past, and sending you three back a millennium is all I could muster. But it should take less to come back from the past to the future, since you won’t be going against the flow of time.”

I see. I don’t really understand the logic behind it, but if Hecate says so, then that must be how it works.

“For the return spell, seek my past self out. I was still inexperienced back then, but only because I lacked the knowledge. I imbued my research results in Nahura, so my past self should be able to read them from her.”

I get it. We’re gonna have the young Hecate use time magic for us, then?

“...Are you saying I’m not currently young?”

“Arwf?! *(I didn’t say anything like that! And I’m sure that didn’t come out of my mouth!)*”

Am I really that easy to read?

Still, this all means we’ll be able to come back here after slaying the Demon Lord.

“But without that collar with all the accumulated mana in it, it will be almost impossible to activate the spell.”

Sounds scary. We could put in all the work to bring the Demon Lord down, and then not be able to come back to this time? Wrong priorities, if you ask me. I’m going to the past to protect Lady Mary and my happy pet life.

“Then don’t lose it, under any circumstances. This plan will only be successful once you’re all back.”

“Arwf! *(Gotcha! I’ll keep it in mind, ma’am!)*” I answer, straightening up my back.

Hecate nods and sticks her staff into the earth. Then she begins her incantation.

“Yala...feo...osel...ken...isu...eo!”

A complicated pattern begins extending in midair from Hecate’s outstretched arms.

“Squeak?! *(A three-dimensional magic circle...! How many years must one need to construct something like this...?!)*”

Even as Len, on my head, is acting all surprised, the magic circle grows more and more complex. Layers stack upon layers as it morphs from a circle into a sphere, and its light grows even stronger.

There is a deep rumbling, as though the earth is quaking, and then a hole opens up in the magic circle.

“Go, Routa. That hole is linked to one thousand years ago.”

Down the cliff from where we are, the hole waits for us to pass through it.

“Woof! *(All right! Thanks for everything, Hecate! I’ll take down the Demon Lord and change the past, and then I’ll be back!)*”

I’ll do my best in my own way to make sure your friends don’t die, and to make those long years of struggle for you into something more enjoyable.

“Squeak! *(Now, let us be off, beloved!)*”

“Meow! *(Leave the in-flight controls to me!)*”

With Len and Nahura holding tightly on to my back, I run toward the cliff.

“Arwf! *(Yikes! This is so scary!)*”

Jumping down from a high cliff a fairly terrifying prospect.

I’m basically bungee jumping without a cord.

I leap toward the passageway, and not a moment later, Nahura covers us all with flotation magic.

With that, we safely pass through.

The moment we do, I look behind me and see everyone watching us go, as

well as Hecate, sweating as she uses her temporal magic and yet smiling at me anyway, praying for my safety.

And so, the darkness inside the hole engulfs us, and my vision completely blacks out.



We float in a darkness that seems both long and short at the same time, unable to see anything at all. Does the world of one thousand years ago really await us at the end of it?

Part of me is scared, but part of me is also a little excited. I wonder what this place looked like a millennium ago.

“Meow! (*We’ll be arriving soon!*)” says Nahura as a white point becomes visible past the darkness.

“Squeak. (*That must be the exit.*)”

The white dot rapidly grows. It eventually gets too bright for my eyes—which have grown accustomed to the dark—and I shut them in spite of myself.

And beyond that is...

“Meow! (*We’ve arrived! Please watch your step!*)” says Nahura, acting like a bus tour guide, as I feel the soles of my feet on the ground.

I cautiously open my eyes against the brightness—and there I see a forest.

“Arwf? (*Huh? Doesn’t seem like all that much has changed to me...*)”

Why, this is the same old forest as always.

The Demon Lord is nearby, right? I figured there would be more devastation, and more monster running rampant, but that doesn’t seem to be the case.

“Arf. (*Oh—but that cliff is gone.*)”

I turn around and see that the sheer cliff we jumped down from isn’t here.

“Meow. (*It looks like our position got shifted a little. But it looks like we came out at just the right spot.*)”

“Arwf? (*Really?*)”

Unlike Nahura, Hecate didn't tell me much about the past, so I don't know whether this is a good place for us to be.

"Squeak. (It seems we should assume the Demon Lord is in this forest.)"

Len is on her guard—her hair is standing up—so she must have sensed something.

"Squeak, squeak. (The miasma is far, far thicker than anything one millennium from now. It feels like we've gone inside the belly of a giant monster.)"

Does it? I don't feel anything at all. I try sniffing around, but the smells are pretty much the same as usual.

"Squeak. (Only you would not mind a pressure of this magnitude.)"

"Mew. (I think it's just that he's dull-witted.)"

Shut up. Why are you giving such high-difficulty tests like "sense the miasma, now" to a cute little pet for?

"Arf, arf. (Anyway, what do we do now? Should we just go defeat the Demon Lord right away?)"

That would be the quickest way. As long as we take him down, the destiny of Lady Mary's family and the seal is sure to change.

"Meow. (I think if we change the past too much, even Lady Hecate won't be able to fix it for us. We should meet Lady Hecate in this time period first and tell her what's happening.)"

Ahh, right. We need Hecate's help to fix things—after we defeat the Demon Lord, she'll need to remove the discrepancies with the time we were in to make it so the young lady still gets born.

Hecate's the only one who was alive a thousand years ago, after all. I guess it wouldn't make sense to just slay the Demon Lord without meeting her.

"Meow. (Thankfully, we just alighted right by where Lady Hecate and the others are.)"

Wait, seriously? Feed me that information sooner next time, will ya?

"Arwf? (Which way? Nahura, can you guide us there?)"

“Mew! (*Of course!*)”

With Nahura guiding me, I run through the forest.

Now that I’m thinking about it, this forest does *feel* kind of different than it does a thousand years from now. And I can sense the presence of monsters in the distance. Although they don’t appear to want to approach us—maybe they’re scoping us out because they don’t know who we are.

“Squeak. (*We are still monsters, after all. If humans were to enter this forest, they would likely attack them without wasting breath, but they won’t be aggressive and hostile right away toward other monsters.*)”

I see, I get it. Who are you calling a monster?

“Mew! (*You, Routa!*)”

Yeah, I know. I just don’t want to admit it.

As we proceed farther, the forest quickly starts getting noisier.

“Arwf? (*What’s that sound?*)”

I can hear something howling along with steel clashing against steel, like someone’s fighting.

“Squeak. (*It seems as though someone is being attacked.*)”

Monsters might not jump at the chance to war with other monsters, but they’ll attack any humans around without question. That’s what Len just said.

“Arwf?! (*Wouldn’t that mean Hecate is being attacked ahead of here?!*)”

Crap. We’ve got to hurry.

I increase my running pace and sprint toward the source of the noise.



The battle was hopeless.

The group of knights protecting Saint Eilene were wounded, half of them already unable to fight.

Even now, their casualties were increasing as they struggled against monsters which weren’t even generals of the Demon Lord’s forces.

Having gotten so close to the Demon Lord's base, the monsters living in the area boasted a completely new level of strength.

"Fall back for now! Rear line, advance! Block their attacks with your shields! Buy me time to cast my magic!"

That shout came from the young high elf sorceress, Hecate Luluarus.

The captain who had originally been leading the knights had left the battle lines in a much earlier skirmish. It was only natural that Hecate, the only one who could defeat the monsters in the Demon Lord's territory, would take command.

They were currently under attack from a two-headed wyvern called Amphisbaena. Though it wasn't a true dragon, it had absorbed much of the miasma supplied from the Demon Lord. Now many times its normal strength, it knocked over entire lines of knights.

One strike from its tail shattered their shields, sending the knights flying away helplessly.

"GORURURURURU..."

Amphisbaena was looking her way.

"Ugh! My spell isn't complete yet...!"

It would take another few seconds to cast the high-level spell that would defeat the two-headed wyvern. If she could dodge one of its attacks, it would give her enough time.

They couldn't afford to withdraw now. Behind her was the horse-drawn carriage carrying Saint Eilene. It was their mission to do whatever it took to deliver her to the Demon Lord.

But at this rate, it would all be over. They had one card too few to take down this wyvern. She only needed the tiniest bit of time. Wasn't there anyone who could buy it for her?

Keeping her head still, she scanned her surroundings with her eyes, but there appeared to be nobody who could do it.

The knights were all injured and exhausted—their defenses didn't seem

enough.

But Hecate didn't stop her incantation. She glared at Amphisbaena—she wouldn't give up, even at the very final moment.

“GORURUGAAAAA!”

Amphisbaena opened its jaws wide before lunging at Hecate, intent on tearing her apart with its fangs.

Her spell wouldn't make it in time. She flinched, thinking that the inside of this sickeningly colored wyvern's mouth would be the last thing she'd ever see.

But that wasn't to be her final sight.

From the corner of her vision came a silvery-white flash of light.

“Arwf! (*Alley-oop!*)”

The silvery-white clump jumped out with a stupid-sounding voice, crashing into the wyvern and sending it careening back.

What incredible charging force—to knock away the mass of a wyvern so large it was higher than the roofs of houses.

Hecate was curious about who it was, but for now defeating the enemy in front of her took priority.

“Sylpheed Saber!”

A swarm of wind slashes carved through Amphisbaena.

“GORURURUAAAAA?!”

Purple blood spurted from all over the wyvern's body as it collapsed to the ground.

“Haah... haah...”

Hecate, on the other side of her predicament now, fell to a knee, her breath ragged.

“Not... Not yet...”

Hecate looked up. She'd taken down Amphisbaena, but she didn't know what that silvery-white creature was that had intruded.

Using her staff for support, she managed to get herself to her feet, then fixed a glare on the intruder.

“Arf?”

In response to her firm gaze, it stared back at her blankly.

It was a giant wolf with a silvery-white coat of fur. It didn’t seem to bear any hostility—considering it was wagging its tail—but would that mean it had just saved her?

No, she couldn’t let her guard down. Monsters were hostile toward humans. Some more than others. But any monster within the Demon Lord’s miasma became more vicious.

This wolf didn’t seem to have the red eyes—the hallmark of monsters that *had* lost their sanity—but that didn’t mean it wouldn’t attack her.

“That long string of attack spells has worn me out, but even still...!”

Hecate lifted her staff and put together a spell.

“A-arwf! (*H-hey—wait, stop!*)” said the silvery-white wolf to her in a panicked voice.

The ability to communicate in human language was the hallmark of a powerful, high-rank monster. She would need to take the initiative and kill it in one hit.

The tip of Hecate’s staff glowed with magic. The silvery-white wolf was in a fluster.

“Cease this at once!”

The one who stopped both of them, however, was the beautiful girl who had just appeared from inside the carriage.



“A-arwf! (*H-hey—wait, stop!*)”

Why are you treating me like an enemy when I just saved you?! Isn’t this when you’re supposed to start squealing and saying how wonderful I am and asking nicely if you can pet me?!

After hurrying through the forest, we came across a group being attacked by a giant monster. I figured I'd ram into it to save them and buy them time, but now the sorcerer who defeated the monster is ready to kill me, too.

They're wearing a big baggy robe and have their hood pulled pretty far down, so it's hard to discern their gender, but their murderous gaze is unmistakable.

But I saved you! They call this repaying kindness with ingratitude!

I do my best to exhibit my harmlessness to convince them that I'm not hostile, but it has zero effect. How coldhearted do you have to be not to be fooled by these big old puppy eyes and how much I'm wagging my tail? I bet this person doesn't even have a heart.

"Arwf! (I'm against violence toward animals!)"

But my desperate cries ring empty, and the sorcerer casts their attack spell.

"Cease this at once!!"

Whoa. That gave me a start. The sorcerer is surprised at the sudden voice ringing out, too, and stops moving.

The voice wasn't that loud, but it was a pretty voice that carried well. I could really feel the charisma in it. And I also feel like I've heard it somewhere before. I think it came from inside the carriage behind the sorcerer.

"Eilene..." says the sorcerer.

Huh?

After calming down a bit, I recognize this sorcerer's voice.

I have even more questions now, as the carriage door opens and a person comes out.

A girl with beautiful hair like flowing gold dust, blue eyes deep as the sea, and a kind smile that seems to gently wrap itself around everything stands there.

"Arw, arw, arw... (Huh? Wait, aren't you...?)"

I've seen the person who just came out of the carriage.

Oh, I've seen her, that's for certain.

I mean, she's...

[illegible]

The carriage was leaning over on a broken wheel, and a girl alighted from it, dressed in white clothing.

"There is no danger. Please put down your staff."

"Lady...Eilene... But...!"

"It will be all right. I feel no enmity from him."

Yeah, that's right! People who try to attack adorable puppy dogs with such big, cute eyes deserve to be punished.

"...Understood, my lady," said the sorceress to the girl, releasing her spell and lowering her staff.

"Arwf... (*Phew, that was scary...*)"

I take another look at the girl who calmed the situation down for me.

"Arf, arf. (*No matter how you look at her, she's got to be Lady Mary's ancestor.*)"

This is more than a strong resemblance. I was so surprised I cried out. She looks so similar that even I mistook one for the other—and I constantly live at Lady Mary's side.

This one might be a bit older than her, age-wise. She's taller, too, and more well-developed in certain places. This is probably what Lady Mary would look like in another few years.

The sorceress called her Eilene, too, so name-wise, she's certain to be the ancestor.

"May I go to you?"

"Wait, Lady Eilene, they're too dangerous!"

The sorceress and other knights try to stop the girl as she starts walking over

to me. But she gives them a calm stare, and they drop to a knee, embarrassed at their own remarks.

“Thank you very much for saving us,” says the girl, extending a hand.

“A-arwf? (*U-umm, you’re welcome?*)”

Being a dog, I can’t exactly kiss her hand, but I do stretch out my head to it.

She chuckles. “You are an adorable one... Yes, your previous ferocity is nowhere to be found.” Smiling, she pets me on the head.

Yay! I got her to head pat me! This kindness, unfettered by the shackles of prejudice—I definitely feel the young lady’s blood in her.

“Arwf, arwf...? (*By the way, are you able to understand what I say, or...?*)”

“Yes, quite clearly.”

Ahh, figures. Lady Mary can understand me, too. Obviously, her ancestor would be able to as well. I’ll have to be extra careful this time not to say anything weird.

“I am Eilene Faulks. Might I have the pleasure of your name, dear savior?”

“Arwf. (*I’m Routa.*)”

The name was given to me by your descendant. I think it’s a good name, don’t you?

“Squeak. (*I am Lenowyrn.*)”

“Meow. (*And my name is Nahura.*)”

The two animals follow my lead, poking out of my mane to introduce themselves to Lady Eilene.

“There are...more?! How strange indeed...!” The sorceress, standing a few steps away, flinches upon seeing us all.

“Hecate, you’re being rude.”

“I’m...terribly sorry.”

Yeah! See? You got scolded!

Wait. Did she just say Hecate?

“It is only that these...people are so incredibly suspicious. I understand they have no hostility toward us, as you say, but...” The sorceress removes the hood that was so low over her face. “I still do not trust them. If any of you do anything untoward to Lady Eilene, you’re not getting away easily!”

Seeing her face has me in shock. “W-woof?! (*H-Hecate?!!*)”

Silver hair and emerald eyes. She’s a little shorter and less full in the chest than the Hecate I know, but it’s her all right.

“Arwf, arwf... (*We met her pretty quickly...*)”

“Mew! (*I told you my guidance would be on point!*)” Nahura puffs out her chest in pride.

Yeah. We were looking for Hecate to begin with, after all. Though I wish we could have met under more peaceful circumstances.

“You know me? Who on earth are you three?”

“Arwf, arwf? (*Hmm. Where do I even start?*)”

“...All right. I’ll hear what you have to say. I must apologize to you, Lady Eilene, but please, tend to the wounded.”

“Yes, you can entrust them to me.”

All the knights look heavily wounded after that battle with the monsters earlier. Lady Eilene walks over to them and holds her hand softly to one of their wounds.

“Ohh, the pain is going away like it never existed...”

“The wound has only just been closed, so you mustn’t try to move yet.”

“Thank you so much, Lady Saint...!”

The knights who have had their injuries healed start crying and thanking Lady Eilene.

“Meowww. (*She is very skilled with healing magic.*)”

Nahura can use healing magic, too, which means Lady Eilene’s abilities must be quite considerable. Now I know that they have amazing talent aside from being able to seal the Demon Lord.

“We’ll obstruct her healing if we stay in this spot. I’ll hear you out over here. And just as a second warning, if you do anything suspicious, you’ll be...” The young Hecate gathers mana into the tip of her staff and threatens us.

“Hecate!”

Lady Eilene, still doing her healing, looks at us with angry eyes.

“I’m... I’m terribly sorry...”

That’s what you get! We’ve got Lady Eilene on our side! There’s no use threatening us!

“Meow. *(Talk about a weakling borrowing the authority of a tiger.)*”

Heh-heh-heh. Reliance upon others is my policy. My intent is to brownnose anyone who has authority—like my life depends on it.

Hecate brings us a short distance away, then sits down. “I’ll thank you for helping us. But I have no idea who any of you are. Monsters, in the Demon Lord’s territory—and yet you saved us. Why? And it seems you know who I am, but how is that possible? Nobody was supposed to know about this distant, secret expedition.”

“Arwf, arwf. *(There’s a pretty complicated reason why, but... Huh. I seriously don’t know where to start.)*”

Will she believe us if I just come out and say we came from the future to change the past?

“Meow. *(Routa, Routa, there’s a faster way to explain than through words. One that Lady Hecate will understand—even this young.)*”

I see. Talk about handy plot characters. Please, go right ahead.

“Meow? *(Lady Hecate, would you do me the favor of looking into my eyes?)*”

“What? Are you telling me to directly read information from your eyes? I can certainly do that, but why would a monster like you have such a skill...?”

“Meow. *(Look, don’t worry about it! Once you have all the information, you’ll know.)*”

“...All right. But if you do anything strange—”

“Arwf, arwf. *(Yeah, yeah. Getting real tired of this exchange.)*”

After I prompt her, Hecate sighs, then brings her face so close to Nahura’s they almost touch and peers into her eyes.

Nahura’s blue eyes and Hecate’s emerald ones each reflect the other’s light, and the colors gradually begin to mix and meld.

“Urgh...”

Hecate looks like she’s struggling; her forehead is getting sweaty. She must be taking in a whole lot more information from Nahura than we could possibly express in words.

They look at each other like that for a few minutes, and then finally their glowing eyes return to normal.

“...Haah, haah...”

It must have taken quite a toll on her, because she drops to her hands and knees, breathing ragged.

“Arwf, arwf? *(Hecate, are you okay?)*”

“Meow. *(I compressed all the information Lady Hecate in the future gave to me and relayed it to her. If anyone besides Lady Hecate accepted it, their brain would’ve probably burned to a crisp.)*”

“A-arwf... *(A-are you all right, Hecate? We can take a break if you need to.)*”

You can use me as a sofa, too. Come, come. I’ll let you lie against me.

“R-Routa, it’s you...?”

Oh—she said my name like Hecate from the future does.

“And Nahura, and, yes, Len...”

As though verifying her memories, she calls us all by our names, and then her expression suddenly becomes startled.

“This is terrible...! At this rate...”

Now aware of the truth of what is about to happen thanks to the message from a thousand years in the future, Hecate covers her mouth as if holding back

an urge to vomit.

Will she really be all right? It's not like there's anything I can do but provide her with this fluffy fur of mine, but still.

"...I'm sorry—that was embarrassing. I'll be fine now."

After struggling for a short time, Hecate catches her breath and stands up.

"I haven't exactly been overtaken by my future memories, but I do feel like I've aged many years in a single breath. It feels like I've been made to read a thousand years' worth of someone else's life. Millions of pages, all at once—I feel queasy."

I'd have figured it would be a lot more than just a little queasiness. Seriously—if you hadn't been Hecate, your head would have gone *ka-boom*.

"But...yes, I understand now. My future self comes up with...some incredible ideas. Routa, Nahura, Len, thank you for coming here from the future to save us."

Well, I mean, we haven't been able to do anything yet, so it's too early to thank us. And you probably would have managed that monster before even if we hadn't arrived. In fact, we might have done something unnecessary and changed the flow of time to the future.

If we don't act along the proper timeline as much as we can, aside from defeating the Demon Lord, it might change the future where Lady Mary is born.

"Arwf, arwf. (*Yeah, I mean, we came to save you, but I don't really know too many of the details myself. If you all could tell me, I'd appreciate it.*)"

"All right. There is still time before defeating the Demon Lord and changing the future."

And so, Hecate told us all about the world we didn't know of a thousand years ago.

This world, right now, is on the brink of total annihilation.

Huge swarms of monsters appeared suddenly from the outskirts of developed land and attacked nations all throughout the world, and the people were massacred without any way to resist. Nobody was able to defeat the massive

armies, led by five powerful monsters known as the Five Demon Generals, and humankind's very survival hung in the balance.

Amid it all, the only means they had come up with to turn the tables was to use Lady Eilene's body to seal away the Demon Lord.

Born with a lot of mana, able to weave many healing spells and bounded-field spells, Eilene has saved many people in the past, and now people praise her as a saint.

She personally devised the spell that could seal the Demon Lord. It was a grand magic, capable of maintaining itself as long as her own bloodline persisted. Even if her descendants didn't have the ability to use magic, their blood would be the medium for the pact; theoretically, it could be maintained forever.

Hecate and the knights had been dispatched in order to deliver Lady Eilene, its user, straight to the Demon Lord, all of them the best of the best warriors they had.

These handpicked elite had gone through a long journey, constantly hiding from the eyes of the Demon Lord's forces, until finally they managed to make it to the Demon Lord's lands.

The Five Demon Generals, all on their own expeditions, had for some reason left their troops behind and returned to these lands, and now was the best chance they would ever have to seal them all away.

To that end, Lady Eilene's team was putting their lives on the line to fulfill that mission.

"And now I understand why the Five Demon Generals all returned here," says Hecate, having received her future memories. "They're not trying to wipe humanity out of their own volition. All of them are under the control of the Demon Lord's miasma."

"A-arwf?! (*W-wait, what?!*)"

A shocking truth.

Actually, speaking honestly, I had an inkling. Whenever I looked at them in the

past, they never seemed like totally evil monsters.

“Weren’t their memories hazy when they were resurrected in the future?”

“Arwf. *(Yeah, now that you mention it, that’s how it seemed.)*”

Mircalla, especially, would talk about her “beloved Demon Lord,” but not even be able to remember his face. Normally you’d never forget what someone like that looked like. The others were very similar; none of them could remember much of what happened a thousand years ago.

“The Five Demon Generals won’t have any minds of their own right now. They’re just puppets acting solely on the orders the Demon Lord has given them to destroy the world.”

Hmm. This Demon Lord really sounds like bad news. The demon generals are so strong—but he could brainwash and manipulate them all?

“They can’t be away from these lands for too long—they need to absorb miasma, which thins out during their expeditions. They must have been coming back here on a regular basis for more.”

In that case, without the Demon Lord, they wouldn’t have ever been doing this?

All the generals in their new forms in the future were surprisingly happy folks. Mircalla and Richmond, in particular, have gotten accustomed to lives as regular people.

“Arwf, arwf? *(Then as long as we defeat the Demon Lord, they won’t attack, either, right?)*”

“Not right away, at least. Unfortunately, if we try to slay the Demon Lord first, they will be sure to act in his defense. We’ll still have to get rid of them all. Even if the Demon Lord’s miasma goes away, it will take a long time for their brainwashing to be completely removed. Either way, we’ll need to seal them, too.”

And if they don’t get revived later on, that might lead to a different future than the one we want. I’m sorry, you guys—looks like I’ll have to seal you away in the past, too.

“Arwf, arwf? (Is Lady Eilene going to be sealing them? Won’t that put a burden on her body?)”

“Compared to sealing the Demon Lord, it will be almost nothing at all. The burden on the generations of female Faulks family members is because of that seal, after all.”

I see. So if the burden the Demon Lord causes is one hundred, the Five Demon Generals would be like ones or twos.

“The difference is likely even greater.”

Wait, for real? This Demon Lord guy is insane! I’m actually unsure we’ll be able to beat him now.

“My future self bet a millennium on this plan, so have faith.”

If she says it herself, I’ll just have to believe in her.

“Arwf, arwf? (Got it. I think I understand the situation now. What should we do, then?)”

If we keep on going, we’ll get to the Demon Lord as planned, and Lady Eilene will end up sealing him away. And then the same thing will happen.

In the future, Hecate said that I’m the only one who can change the timeline. But she didn’t tell me anything about what I would actually have to do.

“Arwf, arwf. (Well, my brain probably wouldn’t understand even if she did, so it would be great if you just give me the instructions when I need them.)”

Even in my previous life, I did nothing but wait for instructions. That was why that exploitative company could wring me dry like they did—but all that doesn’t matter.

I’m gonna take out the Demon Lord lickety-split, then restart my happy pet life at the mansion.

“I know the plan now. In general, we’ll keep on going like this, keeping the past mostly the same. If we do anything too differently, this future information will stop being much help.”

Yeah, I thought as much. I had a bit of sci-fi trope knowledge in my past life,

so I kinda get what Hecate is saying.

“We’ll have Eili keep heading for the Demon Lord like this.”

Oh, she didn’t call her Lady Eilene. And it’s a nickname, too!

Hecate, even in the future, said that Lady Eilene was a precious friend. The lack of protocol and position when it comes to them must be proof of their closeness.

“I’m uneasy leaving her with only the knights for protection, but in the meantime, we’ll get rid of the obstacles in their path.”

I see. It feels like when the Fen Wolves and I protected those adventurers who came to the forest on an investigation.

“Squeak? *(By obstacles, you include the Five Demon Generals, yes?)*”

“Yes. If we defeat them first and Eili seals them in a weakened state, we can decrease the toll on her body even more.”

So as long as the Five Demon Generals get sealed, we can safely ignore how easy or hard it was?

We’ll go along with what history says as much as possible, save for the sealing of the Demon Lord, which will greatly change the future. If the future is changed so that the Demon Lord is defeated instead of sealed, Hecate, living a thousand years from now, will fix things up behind the scenes. Maybe for her, the real job will happen after we defeat the Demon Lord.

“Arwf, arwf? *(But will it really be that easy to find where the generals are?)*”

I know they’ve come back to this forest in order to absorb more miasma, but this forest is really, really big.

We could probably search around the spots where they were sealed in the future, but Belgor, for example, was sealed in a sword and became an item the Hero Alstera carried around. We’d have no idea where he was right now.

“Meow. *(Heh-heh-heh. And that’s where I come in.)*”

“Arwf? *(Hmm, do you have a plan or something?)*”

“Meow. *(In the future, I set an anchor on the Five Demon Generals, so no*

matter where they are, we can just warp to them with my spatial magic.)”

Oh! You never overlook anything. So if it’s the same being, you can still use spatial magic to chase them even though they’re in a different time? I tend to forget about it since we basically use it as a portal to anywhere, but that’s no different than a cheat ability, huh?

“Routa, you’ve defeated them all before, correct? Then you should already know the way to beat them by now.”

Well, there’s not much of a method—I basically just take them down with my barf beam. No strategy, no tactics, none of that.

“Arwf, arwf. (I guess we should do it in the same order as the future? Which means Richmond is the first to beat.)”

I recall the kind, elderly butler—but his true form is Lich, the giant bone monster.

“Arwf. (Ahh. No, wait a second.)”

The barf beam didn’t work on Lich, did it? Even if I completely obliterated his body, he would regenerate from the fine particles and revive. There were specific conditions needed to defeat him.

“Arwf! (The Fen Wolves! We need their help!)”

How did I defeat Lich back then? I and the other Fen Wolves ate him. We took him down by eating his crunchy, bony body.

“That’s correct,” says Hecate in agreement to my answer.

“Arwf, arwf. (But where are all the Fen Wolves now?)”

“In this very forest. They’re the only faction that was able to resist the monster armies led by the Demon Lord.”

Seriously? Man, they’re strong.

“The sealing team’s original plan was to meet with the Fen Wolves ahead of here and borrow their strength to seal the Five Demon Generals.”

I’m surprised they’ve been in this forest since this time period. Though they did say they’d been protecting it for a thousand years. Guess it makes sense

they'd be here. I just hope I can be friends with them in this era, too.

“Based on my future memories, we did a terrible thing to them. After sealing the Demon Lord and restoring peace to the world, a period of terrible oppression of the Fen Wolves began, and all we could do to prevent war from breaking out with them was to shelter them in this forest. They aided us, and we repaid their kindness with persecution.”

Ahh. Garo and the other Fen Wolves did hold a grudge against humans for generations, didn't they? So it was because they could no longer leave this forest.

But wait. Then what was that thousand-year pact they were talking about? They said that if they protected the forest for a thousand years, the Fen Wolf King would be revived, and they would advance their forces on the rest of the world.

Maybe something about that got passed down wrong, like the fairy tales about the Hero.

“What are you discussing?”

The voice from behind makes me jump. “Arwf?! (*Ahh, my lady—er, I mean, Lady Eilene?!*)”

“‘My lady’? I am not of the nobility.”

“A-arwf, arwf. (*Er, um, never mind. Just talking to myself.*)”

“Also, you may call me Eili if you wish.”

“Arf, arf. (*All right. Then I'll call you Lady Eili.*)”

Having finished curing all the knights, Lady Eili has come over to us. Her voice is exactly the same as Lady Mary's, and when addressed from behind, I couldn't even see—or rather, *hear* the difference.

“Hmm?”

When I look away, Lady Eili clasps her hands behind her back and peers into my face. That's exactly like how Lady Mary does it, and it's adorable.

“Lady Eilene...”

“Everyone else is resting over there now, so you can speak freely, Hecate.”

“...Okay, Eili. Thanks for all that. You should rest some, too.”

“Oh, but you’re the one who needs rest! You’ve been commanding everyone this entire time. You’re the most exhausted of us all, aren’t you?”

In contrast to her saintly behavior thus far, Lady Eili is speaking and acting casually now. Even the way she speaks is exactly like Lady Mary. If they were the same age, there would honestly be nothing for me to tell them apart.

“No, I’m fine. In any case, we should halt our advance for today and take a rest. The wounds of the knights may be healed, but their exhaustion is reaching its peak.”

“And you’ll rest, too, right, Hecate?”

“You inform the knights. These three are going to guide me around the forest, so we’ll go a little bit ahead to scout things out.”

“Mrgh. That doesn’t sound like rest!”

“We’ll be back soon, so don’t worry. When I return, I’ll rest for real. Oh, and could you prepare food for these three?”

Hecate looks over to me and pats me on the head. I guess she’s not going to tell Lady Eili about how we traveled through time. Well, there’s nothing she’d be able to do about it anyway, and if anyone aside from Hecate learns who we are, it could affect the future.

“Mmmgh. It’s not fair that you’re the only one making friends with Sir Routa and the others. I wanted to talk to them, too!”

“Please don’t sulk. Also, *please* don’t let the knights see you making such an ungainly face. It will affect morale.”

“Fine, fine, I get it.”

Lady Eili pouted, making her seem younger than she looks. It’s likely something she only lets Hecate see.

“Okay, then, once you get back, you’ll take a rest for real, right?”

“Yes. Even I can admit I’ve been pushing myself. I’ll have to take a good

break.”

“Arf, arf! *(That sounds nice. I love taking breaks, too!)*”

“Oh, are you tired, too, Sir Routa?”

“Arf, arf. *(I want to take breaks all the time even if I’m not tired. Also, please just call me Routa.)*”

“Routa?”

“Arwf! *(Oh, yes! That feels good!)*”

It makes me happy—it’s like Lady Mary is calling my name.

“Let’s go, then, Routa,” says Hecate.

“Arwf. *(Gotcha.)*”

“Please be careful!”

As Lady Eili waves her hand and sees us off and I wag my tail back at her, we venture into the forest with Hecate.



“Arwf, arwf. *(You do know where the Fen Wolves are in this forest, right?)*”

“Indeed. I even know what they’re up to right now.”

Oh? Even that was listed in the information from future Hecate?

“Arwf, arwf. *(Also, they’re monsters, too, so is there any threat of them getting controlled by the Demon Lord?)*”

She said they’re the last faction holding out against the Demon Lord’s forces, but if the Demon Lord can control monsters, how is it that they alone are fine?

“It seems they’ll be all right as long as the Demon Lord doesn’t touch them directly. They are kin of the moon, and closer to spirits who have gained flesh, so perhaps that makes them harder to taint with magic.”

Hmm, hmm. I suppose we won’t have to worry about it, then.

“Well, we can’t say that, either.”

“Arwf?! *(Huh? Why not?!)*”

“The Fen Wolves seem to have taken the offensive as well. They apparently plan on defeating each of the Five Demon Generals one by one, now that they’ve returned without their troops in tow. They’re currently attacking a castle belonging to one of them, but they seem to be at a major disadvantage.”

“Arwf, arwf! *(Well, that’s not good! We have to get there quick!)*”

Which one are they up against? If it’s just one, they won’t be that scary.

“Nahura?”

“Meow? *(Yes?)*”

“Set your coordinates to the vampire princess Carmilla and send us there.”

“Meow! *(Right away, ma’am!)*”

Nahura gives a cry, and the teleportation begins. White floods our vision, and the scenery changes completely.

“Arwf?! *(Whoa?! We’re floating?!)*”

I panic—I don’t feel my feet on the ground anymore.

“Meow! *(I cast flotation magic on the house!)*”

We’re hovering in the skies above the forest.

“Squeak! *(Beloved! Look below!)*”

I do as Len says and see a castle built there—one made of crystal. The fortress is awfully gaudy and looks totally out of place in the deep forest.

Carmilla had set up a maze full of traps in that crystal castle using her magic, hadn’t she? Of course, when we fought, I fired a barf beam and wrecked the whole thing, so I never went inside.

As we look at the exterior, we see figures in an intense battle inside the crystal castle. Carmilla is rampaging, surrounded by blades of bloody wind, and the Fen Wolves are continuing their desperate fight despite their own wounds.

“Arwf?! *(Huh? The battle’s already started!)*”

The Fen Wolves seem to be getting overwhelmed. They’re doing a good job of positioning themselves to avoid traps, but Carmilla’s long-range blood-blade

attacks are keeping them from getting close.

“Grrrrrr...!”

The groan seems to shake the earth.

I think at first it was the Fen Wolves making the noise, but it’s not them.

“Grrrrrr, graaahhh...!”

Carmilla, her eyes stained a deep crimson, is putting her viciousness on full display. She’s using brute force, flinging magic everywhere—the way she’s fighting is completely different from the elegant, cultured Carmilla from the future.

“A-arwf... (W-wait... I don’t really want to get in the way of that...)”

“Her eyes are shining red—proof that the Demon Lord is controlling her. Considering her fighting style, she seems to have lost most of her ability to think as well.”

Is this the time for relaxed observation?! Go help them, quickly!

“Me? I can’t. The future me might have managed, but I’ve only inherited a millennium’s worth of knowledge and technique. I am still inexperienced when it comes to my mana. I don’t have the strength to control what high-level spells I now know.”

“Arwf! (What a disaster!)”

My plan to rely on others for everything is up in smoke!

“Which means,” says Hecate with a smile, “I’ll have to ask you to do it, Rوتا.”

...You’re getting closer and closer to future Hecate, you know. Actually, I guess you’re the same person, so it makes sense?

“You can launch a surprise attack from here, can’t you? And she is the weakest of the Five Demon Generals. It will only take one strike from your ultimate destruction magic.”

I feel really sorry for Mircalla. She’s getting called the weakest. Still, even in the future, she was always the type to use indirect fighting methods like traps

and stratagems.

Whoops—she’s not Mircalla now, but the vampire princess Carmilla. Right.

She doesn’t seem to have noticed us, so we *could* probably hit her with a sneak attack. I take a deep breath, then expel it all at once.

“Grrraaaaaaawwwwwwwww!! (*Retiring as soon as you make your entrance—I’m sorry about thiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiis!!*)”

My instant-noodle beam pierces the castle from directly above, annihilating Carmilla and carving a gaping hole out of the ground to boot.

Having lost its master, fissures begin to form in the crystal castle, and it starts to collapse.

With the sudden disappearance of their opponent, the Fen Wolves are dumbfounded—they have no idea what just happened.

“Woof, woof! (*Heeey, everyone! It’s dangerous, so get out of there!*)” I call out from the skies.

Their shock is renewed. But realizing they can’t stay in the castle like this, they all begin escaping from the newly created hole in it.

Once the last Fen Wolf gets out of there, water begins to spurt up from the ground.

“Arwf?! (*Whoa, what’s that?!*)”

“Squeak. (*You must have hit an underground water vein.*)”

Did my beam dig too deep? It’s always been tough for me to adjust it... I was digging up hot springs and stuff in the future, too, so maybe there’s a lot of water veins under the forest.

“Arwf. (*And now I’m thinking about the hot spring. I wanna go in it...*)”

The hot spring was originally something we dug to be hospitable to the adventurers who came on their investigation, but we couldn’t get them to use it, so it ended up becoming a resting spot for the denizens of the forest.

Come to think of it, I haven’t gone there recently. Once I get back to the future, I’ll take another dip.

While I'm thinking about all that, the crystal castle sinks into the water. The whole area is in a sunken-in spot in the ground, so if the water continues to gush, it might turn into a big lake.

"Squeak. (Ha-ha. I see.)"

"Arf? (What do you see?)"

"Squeak, squeak. (Beloved, this is where the lake is in the future.)"

The lake? You mean that one we always go to play at? Come to think of it, when Carmilla revived, her crystal castle floated up from the bottom of the lake, didn't it?

"Arwf. (Which means I'm the one who made that lake?)"

Wait, no, that doesn't make sense. This is the first time I ever came to the past. I couldn't have been the one who made the lake. Something a lot like that must have happened later on in the past without us here.

"Kee, kee!"

Oh, stop screeching. What do you want?

"It looks like Carmilla."

Hecate grabs a small bat, flapping its wings and storming around, with her fingertips.

Seriously? This thing is Carmilla?

"Right before being obliterated, it seems she unconsciously shifted her soul into a small part of her body and fled."

She was really stubborn in the future, too. And Hecate even captured her afterward, just like now.

"Once we get back, I'll bring Eili here and have her seal Carmilla all at once. When she's this weak, she shouldn't put any strain on her. By the time the seal is undone a thousand years from now, the miasma in Carmilla will be gone, and she'll go back to normal."

That's a relief.

Hecate gives a command to Nahura, who uses spatial magic to save the

annoying bat for later. That means we're finished with Carmilla.

Next, we'll descend from the sky and ask for the support of the Fen Wolves. They're busy crawling out of the ditch, now that they've escaped the castle. Their eyes are pinned to us in midair.

I hope they'll listen to my request, but what should I do if they get really mad for getting in the way of their fight or something? I might cry.

But my fears appeared to be unfounded.

""""Grwl! Grwl! Grwl! *(Our king! Our king! Our great and mighty king!)*""""

Immediately, they've accepted me as "king."

The Fen Wolves apparently took me, the one who buried the wicked monster with a spear of light from the heavens, as a god.

We're given a big welcome, and they listen to what we have to say with keen interest.

"...Woof, woof. *(And that's the short of it. We'll need all the help of the Fen Wolves in order to defeat the next demon general. Will you lend me your strength?)*"

""""Grwl! Grwl! Grwl! *(Our king! Our king! Leave it to us!)*""""

The Fen Wolves give loud howls.

Never expected to come all the way to the past and have the same thing happen with them...



Parting ways with the Fen Wolves for the time being, we return to the carriage, where Lady Eili is waiting.

"Welcome back—Hecate, Routa, Nahura, and Len."

"Thank you. Did anything happen?"

"No, nothing at all. I passed out food to everyone, and I'm having them rest in shifts."

"Arwf, arwf! *(Food?! Sounds great! I'm starving, too!)*"

Time-wise, it hasn't been that long since coming to the past, but you know me—I'm always hungry.

"Here you are."

Lady Eili offers me a hard, rectangular object.

"...Arwf. (*You know, this thing seems super-familiar...*)"

It's the same stuff the adventurers who came to the forest for an investigation in the future were eating with those dead eyes of theirs.

And just like that stuff, this smells like weeds. No doubt about it. It's that putrid, disgusting portable food that that's no better than shit, apart from its nutritional value and how long it keeps.

When I think about it, Lady Eili and the others *did* come all this way with a small, elite group who couldn't resupply. I guess this was the only food they could afford to bring along.

"Here's some for you, too, Hecate."

"Thank you."

And there's Hecate, eating it like it's nothing special. Is she so used to it that her tongue is numb or something?

"Will you not eat it?"

"A-arwf... (*U-urgh...*)"

But my pride as a dog won't allow me to leave anything given to me.

"Arwf! (*I will!*)"

I open my mouth, and Lady Eili tosses the portable ration into it.

Ahh, this is so nostalgic—this claylike mouthfeel. As I chew, making mushy noises, I sink into my memories.

The first time I ever ate this was when Drills, also known as the young lady Elizabeth, fed me. Apparently, it's an excellent product that had a considerable amount of nutritional value no matter what race you are, but there's no doubt that her pet monsters went insane with stress after eating it every day.

“Arwf... (It’s awful...)”

Suppressing an urge to vomit, I manage to choke the whole thing down, but the astringency is still on my tongue. If I have to keep eating stuff like this, I’ll lose my energy.

“It’s really not that good, is it...?”

Lady Eili, who has sat next to me, is nibbling away at her portable ration.

“Arwf. (Oh, so you’re not a fan of it, either, Lady Eili?)”

“Of course not! I may come from the slums, but even we ate food that tasted better than this!”

Lady Eili! The knights are looking over here and wondering what’s wrong. They’re suspicious that I did something to you, so please, settle down.

Also, that was a causal way to reveal your origins. She must have really struggled, coming from a poor family and eventually being worshipped as a saint.

“Actually, someone from the church said that I had magical talent and invited me to the monastery. After that, I didn’t have to worry about eating anymore.”

Lady Eili’s a nun?

“Yes, but I’ve already renounced the cloth. My sealing spell works through a bloodline oath, so I will need to bear children.”

I don’t know how the people in this world view marriage, but it must be tough on her to need to have children to pass down the magic. Once we defeat the Demon Lord, I’d at least like to make it so that she can marry someone she loves.

“...There is no need to worry about that,” Hecate tells me in a soft voice. “For some reason, women in every generation of the Faulks family marry at the end of a passionate romance, so with regards to that, at least, she won’t be unhappy.”

I see—that’s good.

Wait, no, that’s not good. Not good at all. My beloved lady is a woman of the

Faulks family, too. Will she one day find a wonderful man to marry as well?

“Grrrr... (I won’t allow it... I’ll make sure I get in their way...)”

Papa will definitely help me out on this. The two of us men will get in their way.

“Oh, are you sure? I think Mary would have wonderfully adorable children.”

“A-arwf...?! (L-Lady Mary’s...children...?!)”

Well, of *course* they’d be adorable! And it’s a pet’s job to watch over babies, after all. I could get all cozy with the little babies in front of the hearth.

That’s nice. That’s really nice.

“Arwf... (I have no choice. Fine, I’ll let her get married... And whoever it is, they better be good to her!)”

“...Although hers isn’t yet decided...”

Hecate sighs and looks down at me as I drown in my delusions of playing with babies.

“...? What are you talking about?”

Whoops—we were whispering, but it looks like she heard us.

“A-arwf! (N-nothing at all!)”

Urk! I can’t even whistle with my dog’s mouth. Not that I could in my past life anyway!

“Mgh. You two are telling secrets again! That isn’t fair!”

Lady Eili jumps at me and starts scratching around my belly.

“A-arwrw! (Ahhh, wait, ahh, more, please more!)”

I should have expected as much from Lady Mary’s ancestor—her petting technique is immaculate. I let Lady Eili enjoy me as much as she wishes, petting me, scratching me, and burying her face in my fluff.

“Ahhh... This is bliss.”

“A-arwf... (Wh-what skill...)”

My legs give out and I flop over. Lady Eili is such a technician!

She's not afraid of my appearance at all, either. And it seems like the Faulks bigheartedness has been passed down for generations.

"It's gotten dark," notes Lady Eili. "We should rest, too."

The sky is always cloudy because of the miasma, but it does seem like the sun has started to sink below the horizon. Our surroundings grow dimmer by the minute.

"Eili, please sleep in the carriage. It's warmer in there compared to outside."

"But the carriage has broken. It's tilted over and difficult to sleep in."

Lady Eili is right. Only one of the carriage's wheels is gone, and now it's leaning that way. I doubt it will be able to move, and there aren't any horses to pull it anyway. Probably thanks to the monster we saw when we arrived.

"Oh! I have a good idea!"

Lady Eili goes over to the carriage for a few moments, then runs back with blankets in her hands.

"If I sleep with Routa, I'll be warm!"

Ah, I see—that *is* a good plan. My fluffiness won't let any stupid nighttime chills get in.

"Is that all right, Routa?"

"Arwf! (*Yeah, baby! Right this way!*)"

I lie sprawled on the ground and open my legs up wide.

Sleeping with Lady Eili? I'd be delighted. But the problem is whether or not everyone else will be okay with it.

"What am I going to do with you? Oh, fine..."

I thought the knights would stop us, but Hecate gives permission, so they only watch without coming to say anything. Maybe this means they trust me a little now.

"Heh-heh. This really is very warm."

As I lay on the ground, Lady Eili nestles against me and pulls a blanket over herself.

“Arwf! (I’m warm, too!)”

“Squeak. (You and your lovestruck tendencies... Even in the past, this is how you act? You’re utterly indiscriminate.)”

Well, Lady Eili isn’t like that, so you can set your mind at ease.

“Eili, move over a little.”

And then! Even Hecate gets in on the party.

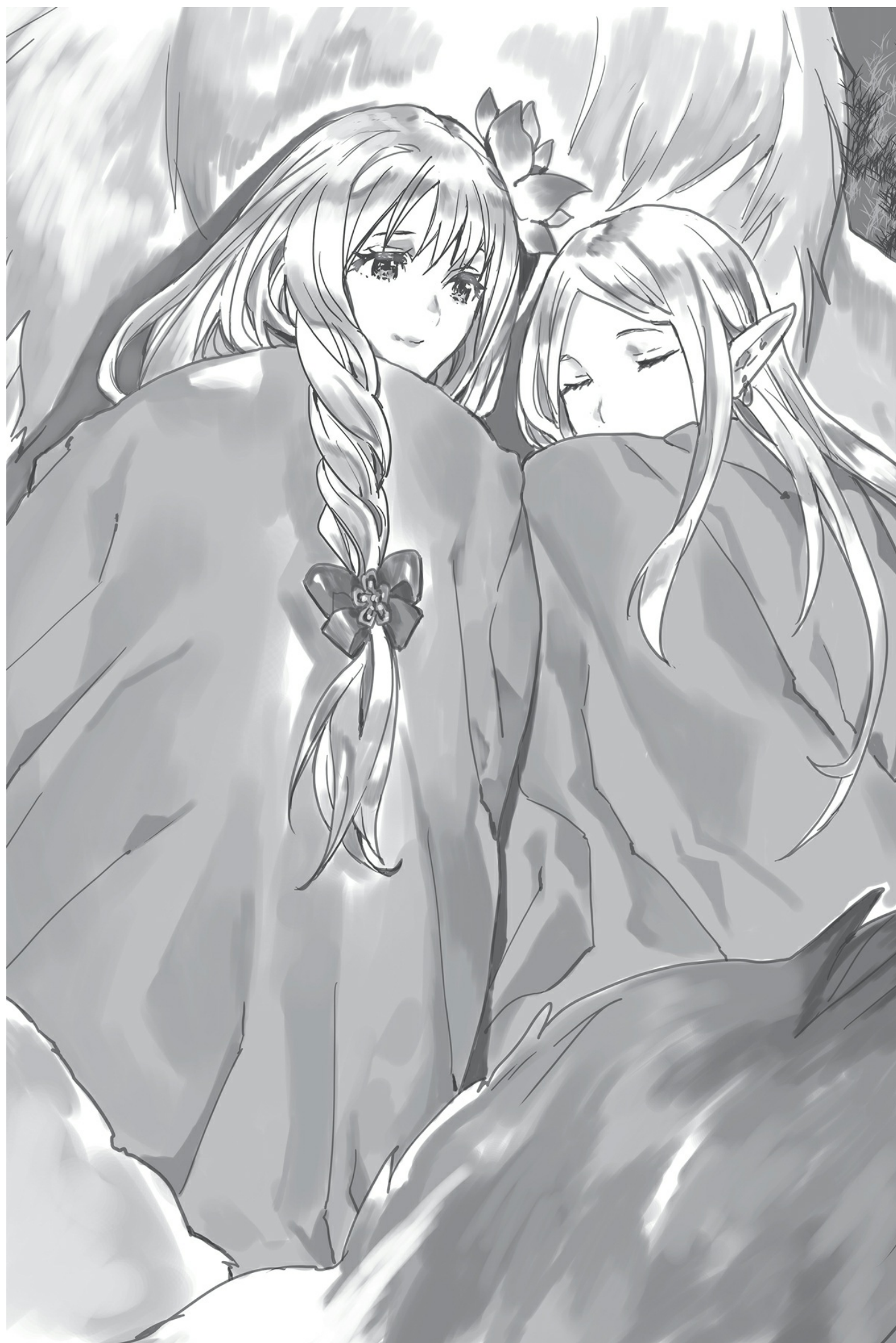
Heh-heh-heh. I’ve got a pretty lady on either side of me! This is the life!

“Mgh. Even you want to sleep with Routa, don’t you?”

“It’s the most efficient way to stay warm. Good night.”

Hecate pulls her blanket all the way over herself and falls fast asleep right away.

Lady Eili, looking relieved that Hecate is finally resting, sinks down into my floof herself.



“Good night, Hecate, Routa, Nahura, and Len.”

“Arwf! *(Good night, Lady Eili!)*”

“Meow! *(Good night, everyone!)*”

“Squeak. *(I will say I appreciate you telling each one of us good night, without forgetting me... Good night, all.)*”

And so, we consigned ourselves to a moment’s rest.



“Hecate is right—I do feel a strong demonic presence coming from this little bat...”

Seeing the struggling bat, screeching as its eyes glow red, Lady Eili nods.

Dawn has broken, and we’ve gone on foot to pay a visit to the site of yesterday’s battle. This time, Lady Eili and the knights are with us as well.

The depression yawns before us, the collapsed crystalline castle half-sunken into the water. It was a considerable distance getting here; it’s evening now, and we’ve been walking since morning. I wondered why we didn’t just use spatial magic to warp here, but that apparently ran the risk of messing up the past too much. The original flow of things had Lady Eili and the others walk all the way to get here.

Still, given my arrival, I figured they’d lose their chance to meet up with the Fen Wolves. Is that going to work out, too? Well, Hecate would say something if there was an issue. Maybe it’s not as important for Lady Eili and the knights to meet the Fen Wolves here since me fighting in their place prevents them from ever directly battling the Five Demon Generals.

“I should seal it within this place, right?” asks Lady Eili.

“Yes, if you please,” says Hecate.

“If this little bat is really one of the Five Demon Generals, do you mind if I ask why it has grown so weak?”

“I do mind.”

“Mgh!”

Lady Eili puffs out her cheeks at Hecate's immediate denial. But after feeling the knights' eyes on her, she recomposes herself.

"Mm-hmm. All right. I will now conduct the sealing."

Lady Eili holds her hand out to Carmilla, now a bat. A thin film of light appears, then forms a sphere and engulfs her. Then it bounces through the air all the way to the half-destroyed crystal castle, where its light becomes more intense.

The moment I squint against the rapidly intensifying light, it seems to burst; and then it disappears. The only things left are debris from the crystal castle and the copious amount of water flowing out of it. Eventually, the castle will sink into the water, creating a large lake here.

"Now then, we're going farther ahead again for reconnaissance. Please make camp here, just like yesterday."

"Okay..."

Hecate already indicated with her attitude that she wouldn't be giving any reasoning, so while Lady Eili pouts with narrowed eyes, she does as she's told.

"Arwf... (But those portable rations will be waiting for us again once we return...)"

Hecate produces our water with magic, so we have fresh drink, but those portable rations that taste like clay every day don't exactly stir enthusiasm.

"Meow. (Oh, I forgot.)"

"Arwf? (Huh?)"

"Mew? (Don't you remember all those things the elves made you hold when we departed from the future?)"

"Arwf? Arwf! (Uh? Ohhh! That's right! They gave us all kinds of stuff!)"

How could I have forgotten about it?

"Woof, woof! (Bring it out! All of it, every last bite!)"

"Meow! (Coming right up!)"

Nahura beckons with her hand, and all the food stored away with her spatial

magic comes raining down.

It's still warm—just as warm as when we got it.

“Ahh—that's amazing!”

Lady Eili jumps up and down in astonishment.

“Where... Where did that come from?!”

“A cat that can produce food...?!”

“Are they servants of the gods themselves...?!”

The knights behind her react as well.

Everyone is probably starved for a warm meal. They don't even notice the drool trickling from their mouths.

“Arwf! *(Wahoo! This looks great!)*”

As I try to be the first one to taste all the food, someone pulls on my neck from behind.

“Wait— Just wait, Routa.”

Hey, you made me croak! How dare you order me around like I'm some kind of dog—wait, I am a dog. Thank you for treating me like a dog.

“Food comes later.”

“Arwf... *(Right...)*”

Now it's my turn to sulk.

“Arf, arf... *(At least let Nahura store it all again! It'll get cold if we leave it out like this...)*”

“If I let her, then you'll probably ask Nahura secretly to let you snack on it along the way.”

Grr! She sees right through me.

I can buy Nahura's cooperation by giving her some, but it doesn't seem like that'll work on her mistress.

Curse you, future Hecate! You gave her too much info about me. In fact, you

completely predicted my behavioral patterns!

“Routa! I won’t eat it until you come back, so come back soon!”

Lady Eili sees us off again, but my steps are slow and plodding.

“Arwf... *(Ahh, my food... My nice, warm food...)*”

Won’t it already be cold by the time we get back?

I give a limp wag of the tail as we set off for the next of the demon generals.



“Arwf... *(Okay, are you wolves ready...?)*” I say softly to the crouching Fen Wolves.

“““Grwl...! Grwl...! Grwl...! *(Our king...! Our king...! We are fully prepared...!)*”””

We’re in a graveyard now. The air has grown dense and eerie. In its center is a throne made of stone, and atop it sits a giant skeleton wearing a robe. That’s our target this time: the necromancer, Lich.

Having come back on his own from an expedition, he probably has very few underlings, but I have a feeling that plenty of bones still rest underground. Alone, I might not be able to eat them quickly enough to prevent his regeneration. It looks like it was the right move to call in the Fen Wolves for assistance.

After warping close to the Fen Wolves with spatial magic, we carefully moved all the way here while concealing our footsteps. Now we just need to wait for our chance—and devour everything.

But for some reason, I can’t get myself going.

“Arwf... *(Lich’s bones were tasty, but right now I’m in the mood for warm food...)*”

“Squeak. *(Give up on that already. If you get back quickly, dinner may still be warm.)*”

“Meow. *(I just hope you don’t fill up on bones and can’t eat any of it when we get back! But if that happens, I will graciously eat it in your stead, so you have*

nothing to worry about.)”

That doesn’t sound like “nothing to worry about.”

“Arwf, arwf. (There’s no need for concern.)”

My appetite is infinite. Even if I ate every last bone, I’d still have more than enough room in my stomach.

“Arwf! (Great! It’s not that bad, as long as I think of this as the appetizer! Everyone, charge! Follow the plan and devour everything!)”

At my signal, the Fen Wolves all rise at once and charge full-speed at Lich.

“Huh?! What?! Who?!”

Noticing our approach, Lich stands up. He seemed to be pretty smart in the future, but now he, too, is speaking only single-word sentences. The Demon Lord’s control must have turned him stupid as well.

The dumb Lich tries to fire magic at us, but he’s too late. With me at the fore, we close in on him, biting all over his body.

“Gwaaaahhhhhh?!”

I’ll rip your bones out, crunch them between my jaws, and swallow them all.

“Arwf! (And boy, are your bones still delicious!)”

They’re a little musty, but that affords them a unique, almost cheesy flavor, which is good in its own right.

“S-stop! Noooooooooooooooooooooo!”

Sensing their master in danger, hordes of skeletons begin crawling up out of their graves and coming at us.

But I’d already let the Fen Wolves know that might happen. They leave Lich to me, and with coordinated effort, rapidly deal with all the small fry around us.

Crunch, crunch. Munch, munch. Gulp.

“““Grwl! Grwl! Grwl! (Our king! Our king! This is delicious!)”””

Ain’t it, though? It’s so good! Keep up the good work and take care of the rest, if you please!

The Fen Wolves, ravenous after their battles with the Demon Lord's forces, gobble up all the skeletons like it's their last meal. Nobody can stop us now that we've turned into gluttonous demons in our own right.

The skeletal forces rapidly dwindle, and while Lich keeps regenerating his body, with each try it comes back smaller.

"Squeak... (Crunch, crunch... *The Fen Wolves are truly strange to find things like this tasty...*)"

"Meow... (*These bones are too hard for my delicate teeth...*)"

I feel so sorry for you, not being able to taste something this delicious. We wolves, on the other hand, are on cloud nine.

"Arwf?! (*Hey, everyone! Y'all enjoyin' yourselves?!*)"

""""Grwl! (*Aw yeaah!*)""""

Carried away, they continue gobbling up the skeletons, down to the last bone shard.

"S-stop... Please... Don't eat me..."

Lich's tiny skull now lies at my feet. It looks like he managed to reconstruct himself one last time, but only his head. Whoops! Guess there was a little left over.

"E-eeek!"

"Hold it right there. He's weak enough now."

Hecate, who has been watching over our passionate food war, picks up the little skull.

"Nahura, put him away."

"Mew. (*Understood.*)"

The weakened Lich is placed into storage with spatial magic. Tomorrow, we'll lead Lady Eili and the others to this graveyard, then have her seal the whole thing away just like with Carmilla.

"Excellent work, Rوتا. That should be it for today."

“Arwf! (We did it! We gotta get back to eat, and fast!)”

“...Squeak? (...After all that, you can still eat more?)”

Of course I can. I’m a man of my word. If I say I’ll eat something, I’m eating it. This took up a bunch of time, though, so the food is probably cold by now.

“Grwl! (Our king!)”

A particularly large black wolf comes to the front of the pack of Fen Wolves. This one looks like Garo. Of course, I can’t tell their faces apart, so I can only say that based on the color of her fur.

“Grwl, grwl?! (Where do you leave us to go?! Will you not stay here, become our king, and lead our pack?!)”

No, I didn’t have any such plans on my agenda. To begin with, I don’t even recognize myself as Fen Wolf King in the future. I’m a man who wants to be taken care of by someone else, not look after others.

“Arf, arf. (You have to look after yourselves. And I would be happy if you looked after me as well.)”

“Squeak...? (How can you say that with a straight face...?)”

Because those were nothing less than my sincerest feelings.

“Meow. (I don’t think telling the truth is always the best option.)”

“Arwf! (Be quiet! Anyway, I’m not becoming the Fen Wolves’ king!)”

“G-grwl...?! (B-but...?!)”

“Woof, woof! (And the next time I meet you will be in one thousand years. Someone who would make you wait that long doesn’t deserve to be your king!)”

That did it. Perfect, flawless logic. Now even the Fen Wolves will have to give up. The Demon Lord in this land will be defeated, so it’s up to you all to keep the peace after that.

“.....”

The black wolf is silent at my words. Crap. Did I make her angry?

The Fen Wolves have stern-looking faces, but they’re even scarier when they

get mad. When they scrunch up their noses, it makes you want to jump out of your skin.

“A-arwf...? (*Umm, do you understand what I’m trying to tell you...?*)” I ask nervously.

The black wolf’s eyes snap wide open. “Grwl! (*Yes, I understand!*)”

“Arwf! (*Eek! I’m sorry!*)”

“Grwl, grwl! (*What you want to say, Your Majesty, is this: If we can protect this forest in the thousand years of your absence, you will appear before us once again!*)”

What? No, that’s not at all what—

“Grwl, grwl! (*Rejoice, one and all! Our king has given us his word! We must stake our entire race’s honor on this command!*)”

“““Grwl! Grwl! Grwl! (*Our king! Our king! We will be awaiting your return!*)”””

“A-arrrrrwf?! (*No, wait, hold oooonnnnnnnnnnnnnnn!*)”

And that was how the thousand-year covenant with the Fen Wolves came to be.

“Arwf... *(That’s strange...)*”

“Squeak. *(Are you still on about that? It is your destiny—your fate bestowed upon you by the heavens—to become the Fen Wolf King. Give up, and reign as their Fenrir. In addition, take me as your wife.)*”

No to both of those! I absolutely refuse.

“Arf, arf. *(No, not that. The Fen Wolves’ thousand-year-long covenant was created because we came to the past, right? I was just wondering why it existed before we actually went to the past.)*”

“...Squeak? *(...Hrm? I haven’t the faintest what it is you’re getting at, beloved.)*”

“Arwf... *(Ugh, once again, the muscle-for-brains, thousand-years-with-no-friends dragon is no help...)*”

It looks like it’s still a little early to have the time paradox talk with Len.

“Squeak! *(That is because you are speaking nonsense!)*”

Hmm. Maybe I *am* thinking about it too hard. Hecate didn’t say anything in particular, so maybe the covenant was originally formed in this era for a different reason.

“Arf, arf. *(Well, whatever. If we defeat the Demon Lord and the future changes, nothing after that will matter.)*”

I’ve abandoned my worries. I’m just a dog! There’s no way I’d be able to solve such a difficult problem.

“Arf, arf! *(All that thinking is making me hungry. We’ll be back in a jiffy, everyone!)*”

With Nahura’s spatial magic, we warp to a spot near where Lady Eili and the others have made camp, and then I dash back to them.

“Arwf, arwf! (I think I smell something tasty!)”

It’s the scent of the soup I had at the elves’ village.

“Welcome back, everyone. I’ve already reheated the food.”

Lady Eili has been stirring a pot over a flame.

“Arf, arf! (Wow! Thanks, Lady Eili!)”

I appreciate warm soup in a completely different way from cold soup. The breads and cheeses have been cooked as well, and their fragrant scents waft through the air.

“Arf, arf! (What awesome smells! Let’s eat it all, quick! Everyone, sit down!)”

And pass me the soup!

“Hee-hee. Here you are.”

When they gave me the souvenirs in the village, they gave me the eating utensils along with them—enough to pass out to everyone.

After having the soup poured into the biggest bowl available, I start wolfing it down, not caring if it burned my tongue.

“Arf, arf! (Oh yes! This is sinking deep into my heart!)”

It’s hard not to describe the soup as “bursting with flavor”—it’s full of umami from the mushrooms and wild vegetables.

“I feel rejuvenated... And these flavors are so nostalgic...”

After taking a sip of her soup, Hecate heaves a sigh.

Well, she is an elf. She must have pretty fond memories of elven village cooking.

The knights don’t say anything so that they don’t cause a commotion, but it’s clear they’re completely absorbed in shoveling the food down with reckless abandon.

“Arf, arf? (Now that I think about it, should we have a flame like this?)”

We didn’t have one going when we went to sleep yesterday; I figured it was to be inconspicuous, to not stand out in the Demon Lord’s territory.

“I have bounded-field magic blocking us off from our surroundings. Unless they come very close, the monsters shouldn’t be able to sense the fire, or the smoke, or the smells.”

But, sheesh, Lady Eili’s incredible. She probably used that magic to get all the way to this forest in the first place.

“I wouldn’t normally have had enough strength to use the spell for cooking. But sealing the demon generals took almost no energy.”

I get it. She’s been conserving her strength for the sealing this whole time, hasn’t she? If the burden on Lady Eili has decreased thanks to us taking it upon ourselves to fight the Five Demon Generals, then that’s fine with me. After all, now we owe her one for this warm meal.

“I’ll only have the field up while we’re eating, but feel free to warm yourselves up as much as you’d like, everyone.”

“Your words honor us, my lady...!”

Lady Eili smiles, and the knights formally bow in response.

“Arf, arf! *(Oh, you don’t need to do all that. Let’s just be friendly and eat together. You too, Lady Eili! Eat up!)*”

“Oh, yes! It is very good!”

“Woof! *(Ain’t it? I’m going back for seconds!)*”

And I even thought this enjoyable meal would keep going, just like that, too.

“Not much longer now...” murmurs Hecate, standing up.

“Arwf? *(What’s wrong, Hecate? You didn’t finish your food.)*”

“Unfortunately, dinnertime is over.”

Hecate directs a sharp stare deeper into the woods.

“Wh-what?! Is something coming?!”

The knights, apparently, also noticing someone’s approach, take their swords in hand and form up to protect Lady Eili.

As they do, the figure appears, mowing down the trees in the forest as it

comes.

“Grr, ggghhh...!”

It’s a dark-iron knight, with thick armor encasing its whole body. Gripping a giant halberd in both hands, it stomps deep footprints into the land as it approaches.

Our knights are like matchsticks in comparison. Their armor is nowhere near as thick as that thing’s.

“How...?! The bounded-field spell has been active this whole time...!”

“Eili, it’s not your fault,” Hecate tells her, making sure the knights can’t hear. “It didn’t find us by tracing us physically.”

“Hecate? What do you mean by that? How do you know such a thing?”

It seems Hecate knew from her future knowledge that this dark knight was going to show up. And she also appears to know its identity.

“Hiding...futile...! My nose... It can...smell...your minds...!”

The dark knight speaks, scarlet eyes flashing inside its helmet. His voice sounds like rusted swords scraping together. No person—no *creature*—could ever produce a voice like that.

“My name...is...! Belgor! Belgor, the ambassador of the underworld!”

The dark knight proudly announces its name.

“Arwf?! (*Wait, this thing is Belgor?!*)”

In the future, Belgor was a demon who possessed the Hero’s sword. After reappearing and getting beaten down in a fight with me, he was reconfigured into a knife and given to old man James as a gift.

He seemed quite satisfied in his position being used by a super-top-class chef, but I didn’t know he looked like *this* in the past. His intelligence seems to have taken the same hit as the other demon generals, but given he can still speak, he’s better off than Mircalla was.

If I recall, Belgor exists only mentally, and he can possess any object he wants. When he was possessing the Hero’s sword, he could freely manipulate his

chosen vessel to such an extent that ultimately, he became a sword giant and attacked us.

Which means this dark knight's armor might be completely hollow. Looking more closely, every time the dark knight moves, a purple gas leaks out of its joints. That's probably Belgor's actual form.

And I can only sit there, leisurely analyzing him, because I know exactly where this is headed.

"Die, enemies of the Demon Lord!"

The dark knight holds its giant halberd aloft.

"Eeek?!"

"Stand firm! We must defend Lady Eilene!"

The knights, though overcome with fear, step forward to protect Lady Eili.

"He-Hecate! We must fight, too!" insists Lady Eili, but Hecate doesn't move from behind the knights.

And her gaze is not forward, but on me, off to the side.

"Arf, arf. *(Yeah, yeah. I'm up, huh?)*"

I wondered if it was a good idea to let Lady Eili know we've planned on defeating the demon generals, but Hecate's the one who knows the plan. If she wants me to do it, there won't be any issues.

"Arf, arf? *(Okay, okay, could you all let me through, please?)*"

I push the knights out of the way and step out in front.

Hey, their legs are all shaking! I only pushed them a tiny bit. Some of them can't even stand up anymore; they're on their rear ends.

Well, with how intimidating Belgor is, I guess I can't blame them for being terrified. I peed myself out of fear when I first saw him, too. And there was probably, like, huge puddles of it coming out of me.

But I know something they don't. To me, this enemy isn't scary at all.

"Arf, arf! *(Bring it on!)*"

“Die!”

Successfully provoked, Belgor swings his halberd down from its high, upraised position.

A strike which could very well split and destroy the earth comes plummeting down toward me.

“A-arwf! (*A-actually, I’m a little scared!*)”

The halberd makes a direct hit on my scared little head...

...and a moment later, the blade snaps at the haft, flying off into the distance.

“Wh-what?!”

“Arf, arf! (*Fwa-ha-ha! My name is Routa! Master of weapon-breaking!*)”

How many swords of Zenobia’s do you think I’ve broken?

And even when we fought in the future, one of Belgor’s full-force attacks couldn’t damage even a single strand of my fur.

“G-gwahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

All I did was break his weapon, and now he’s crying out in agony.

“Squeak. (*I believe it’s because he was actually possessing the weapon.*)”

Oh, he did possess a sword in the future, too. Maybe it’s a compatibility thing for him.

Purple gas spurts from the armor, and the empty suit, its contents gone, collapses. That gas floating in the air is Belgor’s true form.

“Eili, now! With him this weak, you’ll seal him easily.”

“R-right!”

At Hecate’s signal, Lady Eili places the seal on Belgor.

“Gh-ghhhrrr...!”

But Belgor tries to resist one final time.

“Eili! Don’t use the land for the seal—use that!”

Hecate points to a sword, belonging to one of the knights still on their rear

end.

It got stuck in the ground when he fell.

“Squeak. *(I see. Compatibility.)*”

“Meow. *(Lady Hecate is as smart as ever. By luring him into an easy-to-possess weapon, she’s making the sealing even easier.)*”

As Hecate intended, as soon as Lady Eili changes the target of her seal, Belgor’s resistance wanes. And then he gets sucked into the sword and sealed within it.

He was possessing a sword in the future, too. Does that mean this one is going to become the Hero’s holy sword?

I mean, it’s a fake, but still. The sword is evil and misled Allie’s entire clan. I wonder what will happen in this future.

“Sir knight,” says Hecate to the owner of the sword. “Please never touch this sword. It has changed into one that will bestow incredible strength upon its owner, but you are never, under any circumstances, to draw it.”

Wait, wouldn’t that just make him more curious? Like if you give someone a button and tell them not to push it.

“A-all right.”

The knight nods, but his eyes seem drawn to the sword’s eerie glow. I doubt he’s gonna hold out.

We can’t bring the sword back with us—otherwise the future would change too much—so Hecate must actually be after him to draw it.

Which means this young man is going to be Alstera’s ancestor, huh? We got it nice and weak, so please take care not to let it corrupt your heart.

“Routa! Are you all right?!”

Finished with the sealing, Lady Eili runs over to where I am.

“Your head! Does it hurt?!”

And then, frantically, she tries to cast a healing spell on me.

“Arwww... (Ahhh... It feels so light and good...)”

I’m completely unharmed, but lady Eili’s healing magic is as comforting as getting into a warm bath.

“Eili, stop wasting mana. Routa is perfectly fine.”

What do you mean, “wasting”? It felt really good, so it wasn’t a waste!

“If all it did was make you feel good, then it was a waste.”

“B-but Hecate, he was struck by such a powerful attack...”

“Arf, arf. (I’m really fine. Look—it didn’t even scratch me.)”

“It’s true...”

After parting the fur on my forehead and checking to make sure I’m not wounded, she finally gives me some head pats.

“Routa, you really are amazing.”

Well, this Fenrir body is what’s really amazing. Inside, my brain is as mushy as tofu. The only reason I’ve even survived is because my outside is so stupidly strong.

“And how did you know one of the demon generals was coming, Hecate? None of us knew that the bounded-field spell wasn’t going to work...”

Oh no. Lady Eili is starting to doubt us.

“We can have that discussion another time. Other monsters may have heard the noise. For now, we should clear out before anything happens.”

Hecate evades Lady Eili’s question, then makes preparations to move camp.

“.....”

Lady Eili watches her from behind with worry in her eyes.



Once dawn broke, we moved to Lich’s graveyard—though it’s in a different order—and sealed him along with his now-small skull.

“You aren’t going to tell me why the demon generals are so weak, are you?”

“...No, and I’m sorry. It’s nothing you could do anything about even if you knew.”

“...I see,” answers Lady Eili, a little crestfallen, before meeting my eyes. “Routa, do you know something?”

“A-arwf?! (*Wh-why would you think that?!?*)”

“You’re always going off with Hecate. But you’re not scouting ahead—you’re defeating the demon generals for us before we get to them, aren’t you? You essentially defeated Belgor, too. And how do you know where they’ll be? We’ve sealed three of them in just two days. It’s going far too well.”

“A-arwrw... (*Ahhh, I, err, well...*)”

The barrage of questions has me overwhelmed. She’s sharp in unexpected ways—again, just like her descendant, Lady Mary.

“A-arwf. (*I, umm, I don’t know anything. And I wish you wouldn’t try to talk about difficult things to a puppy dog whose only talent is being adorable.*)”

“Mgh. Are you lying? It isn’t good to lie, you know.” She grabs my ears and starts kneading them from side to side.

“Arwf! (*Ahh! Please don’t work them like that! It feels kind of good!*)”

“If you want me to do this more, then spit it out!”

“Arwf! (*No! I have a right to remain silent! But please scratch my ears more!*)”

The battle continues between myself and Lady Eili as I squat and she stands her ground.

“Eili, don’t bother Routa like that. Whoever he is, the fact remains that he’s helping us.”

Hecate throws me a lifeline. Her words were also an announcement to the knights around us who have started setting up camp.

I mean, I can’t blame them for being suspicious of me. It makes sense that the knights guarding Lady Eili would be cautious around me.

“...All right.”

Lady Eili removes her hands from my ears; they perk straight back up when

released.

She doesn't look very happy about it, but if she knows too much of what's going on, it could affect the future. Please forgive me.

Out of consideration for the burden on Lady Eili for successively sealing Carmilla, Belgor, and Lich, we've stopped our advance for today.

Lady Eili insists she isn't tired at all—and she probably isn't lying.

Normally, the burden on her would have been much greater, since she would have had to seal the Five Demon Generals in their most powerful forms. With me defeating them first, it doesn't put a burden on her anymore. She truly doesn't look tired.

"Look, just get some rest today."

"...All right."

Taking note of Hecate's commanding tone, Lady Eili reluctantly backs off.

"We're going to scout out a little bit ahead."

"...Again?"

"Yes, again."

Lady Eili certainly doesn't look convinced, but Hecate starts walking without so much as a glance at her.

It seems a little cold to me, but even this is part of defeating the Demon Lord and changing the future. I'm sorry, Lady Eili.

I follow Hecate and leave the campsite behind.

"We should be far enough now."

Our spatial magic warping is apparently classified as a grand magic that doesn't exist in this era. And it is a little *too* convenient, if you ask me. We'd obviously need to go somewhere we won't be seen before we use it as a precaution.

Even Hecate, after receiving her future knowledge, doesn't seem to have mastered it yet.

“Meow! (All right, then! Next we’re going to where Gigas is!)”

Nahura casts her spatial magic. I can’t stand how this dumb cat is able to use such a huge spell, but saying it out loud would come back to hit me right in the face like a boomerang, so I don’t.

The scenery goes white, and a moment later, we’re in front of a large waterfall.

“A-arwf?! (Wh-whoa! I know this place!)”

I *totally* remember what this place is.

“Squeak! (It’s my nest!)”

A smooth waterfall towers high above us. Like Len says, this is the nest she used to live in. Is Gigas supposed to be somewhere nearby?

“Nahura, you must have gotten the place wrong.”

“M-mewl? (H-huh? That’s strange. Why are the coordinates off?)”

But it seems like Nahura simply messed up.

“Arwf! (Hey, cat next door—you’re a hunk of junk, you homunculus!)”

“M-myaa-myaa?! (Wh-what was that?! Nahura is not a hunk of junk! There must be a good reason for this!)”

“Arf, arf. (Yeah, yeah. That’s what all the homunculi say.)”

Still, this would be the first time I’ve ever seen her mess up her teleportation. I suppose even monkeys fall from trees—or, in this case, even cats mess up their jumps.

“Wh-what is going on here? What is the meaning of this?!”

“Arwf? (Huh?)”

I hear a voice that isn’t supposed to be here.

“Arwf?! (Lady Eili?!)”

Lady Eili, who’s supposed to be minding the campsite, is right next to us for some reason.

“Eili?! What are you doing here?!”

Hecate is shocked, too—even she must not have expected this.

“I used my bounded-field magic to conceal myself and follow you. I knew you were hiding something!”

I didn’t realize we were being tailed. Not only did she make herself invisible, she even hid from our noses and ears to track us? That’s OP...

Belgor’s detection must simply have been unique—normally, she’d be able to act without anyone seeing her, huh? Lady Eili being able to conserve her strength has backfired.

“Meow. (I didn’t include Lady Eili in my calculations, so the warp point got shifted. In other words, it wasn’t my fault. Routa, don’t you think you owe someone an apology?)”

“Arwf! (I’m sorry for calling you a hunk of junk!)”

I fall before Nahura, groveling.

Hecate, watching my terrible performance, puts a hand to her forehead and sighs. “Nahura, send Eili back to the campsite. The knights are probably worried sick now that their saint is missing.”

“I don’t want to. I’m not moving from this spot until you give me an explanation!” says Lady Eili, grabbing hold of me.

“Arwf! (I’m being dog-napped!)”

“That’s right. This is a dog-napping. If you ever want to see Routa again, you’ll tell me the truth!”

Her initiative, her stubbornness... No matter how you slice it, she’s just like Lady Mary.

“Arwf, arwf? (Hey, Hecate, shouldn’t we just spill the beans at this point?)”

Even if we force the issue and drive her off, she’ll just do it again. And she might follow us on foot next time.

I’m sure of it—because of how well I know Lady Mary. Lady Eili is sure to do it again. If we don’t tell her the circumstances and it leads to a careless act on her part, wouldn’t that have a much worse effect on the future?

“...It seems I was being impatient as well,” says Hecate. “I, of all people, know just what kind of person Eili is.”

“That’s right. You’re a good friend, but you forget things about me far too often.”

“This story will venture deep into the preposterous, and you’ll have no idea whether to believe it. Do you still want to know?”

Hecate accepted us since she received a thousand years’ worth of information from Nahura, but will Lady Eili be all right? I would think the more one knew about magic, the more unbelievable us coming from the future to save them would be.

“I do. I would never disbelieve anything you said in good faith, Hecate.”

“All right. It’ll take a bit, but please, hear me out.”

Hecate tells Lady Eili about the events that will occur soon.

About how she’ll succeed at sealing the Demon Lord, but the burden will be so heavy that it will shorten the lifespans of many generations of Faulks family members.

About how her bloodline will manage to stay connected, the seal’s spell passed down from mother to daughter, but the seal will break in one thousand years and the world will be destroyed by the Demon Lord.



That in the future, Hecate will work out a plan to go back one thousand years to defeat the Demon Lord in this time period, thus saving both the world and the family of her dear friend.

That the plan hinges on me, and that we were acting in secret—intending not to tell even Eili—so that we didn’t change the future aside from defeating the Demon Lord.

We let Lady Eili hear it all.

“But that’s...”

Lady Eili has tears in her eyes.

“Hecate...! I’m sorry...! It’s my fault...! You had to suffer for a thousand years...!”

“Don’t apologize, Eili. It isn’t your fault,” says Hecate, like an older sister to a younger sister, as she gives Lady Eili a hug. “And if the plan succeeds, my own memories of the past millennium will become happy ones.”

“...Okay. Then we must succeed.” Lady Eili wipes her tears and levels a firm gaze at Hecate. “Is there anything I can do, Hecate? I want to be of some help as well.”

“...You’re not counted among the players in this plan. If I had to say, I’d tell you not to do anything except keep sealing the demon generals and seal the Demon Lord, and nothing else.”

“I... I see...”

Everyone would feel exasperated after hearing all that and learning there was still nothing they could do. Maybe Hecate knew that, and that’s why she didn’t tell her.

“Squeak. *(That’s strange.)*”

“Arf? *(Now you’re saying it, Len? What’s strange?)*”

I’d thought she was keeping pretty quiet. Apparently, she’s been looking at the waterfall this whole time. Does she still have lingering regrets about her nest?

“Arf, arf. (Look, I’m sorry I put all those holes in your nest. Once we get back, I’ll see if I can’t fix them right up—)”

“Squeak! (Not that! I sense someone who isn’t me from this nest!)”

“Arf? (Really? What does it mean?)”

Wasn’t Len already shut up in this nest a thousand years ago? Why would someone else be living here?

“Squeak. (I sense a dragon, but a different one than me.)”

“Arf, arf? (That makes even less sense. How would a dragon who’s not you be living here?)”

Or maybe Len came in after the fact and stole the nest away from this dragon?

“Squeak! (I’ve done nothing of the sort! This nest has been my home since my birth!)”

In that case, who on earth could the dragon in there be?

“Squeak... (Beloved...)”

Len looks at me imploringly.

“Arwrw. (All right, all right. Let’s check it out.)”

“Squeak! (My love! You are truly too kind!)”

Mice clinging to me doesn’t make me happy in the slightest, but I’d feel weird leaving things as they are.

“Arf, arf? (Hecate, sorry, but could you wait out here? I want to check inside.)”

“...We only came here because I didn’t predict Eili’s actions, so I don’t mind. Just to be sure, though, we should all go. This may not be the exact location, but Gigas is somewhere nearby, so we can’t say for sure it isn’t dangerous.”

“Arwf! (Great! Then let’s all head for the back of that waterfall.)”

Lady Eili, who doesn’t know enough to be aware of Len’s nature, looks at us blankly, but when she sees the waterfall from behind, she starts making gleeful noises.

“Arf, arf. *(The inside isn’t much different than a thousand years from now.)*”

I take the lead, proceeding into the cave.

“Squeak. *(It’s close—the dragon is just up ahead.)*”

“Arf... *(Right, but maybe we should be really careful.)*”

I’ve been picking up a certain scent for a while now.

The scent of blood.

Did the dragon spill it...? Or does it belong to the dragon itself? I don’t know, but there’s quite a lot of it.

We turn a corner in the cave and come out into a large cavern. This is where Len slept, wasn’t it?

In the center lies an enormous creature. A dragon with the same azure scales as Len. Its body appeared to be several times bigger than even hers.

Having sensed our arrival, the dragon slowly lifts its head.

“GURORO... *(Come no closer... I wish only to spend my final moments with my child... Please leave here in peace...)*”

The dragon’s eyes hold no hostility, but they do hold the resolve to fight to the bitter end if we were to get any closer.

“Arf. *(Everyone, stop.)*”

It happened right as I said that.

“Squeak! *(Mother!)*”

Len jumps down from my head and runs up to the dragon.

“Arf...? *(Mother...? What?)*”

“GURORO... *(Little one. Why do you call me mother? This egg is my only child...)*”

The large dragon is cradling a small egg near its belly. I call it small, but only compared to the size of the dragon. It’s easily at least as tall as Lady Eili. The dragon is protecting the egg tenderly, with love.

“GURORO... *(My mate was killed by that wicked Demon Lord. This egg is my*

only family... I do not recall having any small children like you... If you are here to berate the dying, then cease...)"

"Squeak! (No, I am your daughter! I am Lenowym! Daughter of the fierce red dragon Vritra and the quiet blue dragon Meliowym!)"

"GURORO...?! (How do you know my name, and my husband's name...?! And this faint scent coming from you... Are you truly my daughter, Lenowym...?!)"

"Squeak! (Look upon me, Mother!)"

Len dispels her transformation.

Before us now stands a beautiful blue dragon.

"GURORO...! (Ohhh, that is the very image of the daughter in my mind's eye...!)" Meliowym's eyes goggle. *"GURORO... (But how...? Do I have two daughters...?)"*

"I'll explain that for you."

Hecate tells Meliowym an abridged version of the story of us coming from the future.

"GURORO... (So that is what happened... To think I would be able to see my grown daughter as I die... What a splendid end to have, what good fortune to visit me...)"

Meliowym closes her eyes.

She's nearing the end.

"GARORO! (Mother! Don't die! Please, don't die, Mother!)"

Len, having returned to her dragon form, clings to Meliowym, but the wounds are too deep, and it appears that she can't move anymore.

"GARO... (Mother...)"

Lady Eili passes underneath the crying Len.

"It'll be all right."

She touches the tip of Meliowym's nose, then incants a healing spell.

When she does, the deep wound starts rapidly healing.

“GARO? (*Mother?*)” says Len.

Meliowyrm opens her eyes again. “GURORO... (*I cannot believe it... Such grievous wounds, gone without a trace...! I had no idea such a powerful user of magic existed among the humans...!*)”

Seeing her mother’s life saved before her eyes, Len leaps onto her.

“GARORO! (*Mother! Oh, Mother!*)”

I’m really happy for you, Len. But please be careful you don’t stomp all over us when you move.

Also, the egg! The egg is about to fall over...!



Did we change the future?

Len’s mother was originally supposed to die here, but I no longer know what kind of effects it will have now that Lady Eili saved her.

“GURORO. (*Then I shall go into hiding for a time. Fortunately, my child is yet to hatch from this egg. If you come back again in one thousand years, I believe there should be no discord with the future.*)”

Yeah, that would make all the same things happen.

Though I do feel bad that Len will have to be alone for a millennium again.

“GURORO. (*Don’t be. It’s unfortunate that I will be unable to watch over my child as she grows, but a mere thousand years is not a major issue for the dragons.*)”

As to be expected from “the dragons”—they have a totally different sense of scale when it comes to time.

And so, we bid farewell to Meliowyrm, then return to our original goal: slaying Gigas, the giant commander.

“GARORO. (*Hmm-hmm-hmm. Once we return to our original time, I will be able to see Mother again...! Happy day, oh, happy day...!*)”

“Meow. (*I’m so happy for you, Lady Len.*)”

“Arwf, arwf. (I’m glad you’re happy, but you’ll stick out like a sore thumb in that form. Go back to being a mouse before other monsters spot us.)”

“GARORO... (I’ve told you many times that this form is my true one...)”

As Len is about to reluctantly change back into a mouse, Hecate stops her.

“Wait a moment, Len. We may as well fly through the sky like this.”

It seems Hecate has a plan of some sort.

“Huh?! This time we’re flying through the sky?!”

Lady Eili is pleased with that. She must intend to come with us to defeat Gigas.

“GARORO! (You are the benefactor of both my mother and myself! You will have the best seat!)”

“Hooray! Thank you!”

We climb onto Len’s back, and she flies north with Hecate’s guidance.

There we find the mountain renowned as a sacred landmark in the future—now, however, it is a demon mountain, stained with the Demon Lord’s miasma.

Len rapidly accelerates, and after we pass through the thick fog, we’re greeted by the bright blue sky and a sea of clouds expanding below us.

“Wow, it’s so pretty!”

“Arf, arf. (I’d like to show this to the young lady, too. I’ll have to do that once I get back to the future.)”

For a time, we gaze at the beautiful scenery in awe. Meanwhile, Hecate is talking to Nahura about something.

“Around here, yes?”

“Mew. (Yes. The coordinates point directly below us, too.)”

“All right, then. Routa?”

“Arf? (Oh, what is it? Are we going to do something?)”

I never heard anything about *what* we’re going to do.

“You can go back to your original form now.”

My original form? What’s that? This is my exact form.

“Yes, yes, you’ve made your point, so just do it.”

Hecate starts pushing against me repeatedly.

“Arf, arf! *(Hey—stop that! I’ll lose my balance up here!)*”

“Off you go, now.”

For real? She actually intends to push me off.

“Recall how you defeated Gigas.”

Then, finally, I remember. “Arwf... *(Oh, that’s right... My actual size.)*”

It was such a detestable memory that I’d blocked it out. But it’s probably the only way to defeat Gigas, who is under these clouds.

I dispel the transformation technique I’ve very strictly kept active.

In a moment, my body explodes in size. With my vision still up in the sky, my body and my limbs pierce the clouds by themselves, growing enormous.

“Arwf! *(Oh! I heard a squish.)*”

Feeling an awful sensation underfoot, like I just squished a bug, I know that Gigas has been crushed.

With that, the battle is over, having lasted no more than an instant.

From Gigas’s point of view, there would have been a huge dog foot suddenly dropping from the sky and squashing him. How pitiful, to be defeated and sealed before he has any idea what’s going on.

You can sleep as long as you want, a thousand years from now.



After sealing Gigas, we return to the camp for a bit, then order the knights to remain on standby. We won’t need to sneak around anymore, now that Lady Eili—the one we wanted to keep this a secret from—knows about it. We immediately set off to seal the last of the Five Demon Generals: Behemoth, the war demon and king of beasts.

“There’s a high possibility everyone knows about us now that Routa has used his giant form. Before the Demon Lord does anything, we need to take care of her quickly.”

Hecate seems to have planned for this all along.

“Arf, arf. *(But Behemoth and I never fought.)*”

And I’m not sure I’ll be able to do it. During that single moment we confronted each other in the future, she felt stronger even than me. If that miracle of her falling head over heels for me and abandoning her power hadn’t happened, it might have been me who lost.

To make things worse, she’ll be brainwashed right now from the miasma. Will I be able to win in a fair fight?

As I’m worrying about it, Nahura’s spatial magic activates, and we warp to where Behemoth is.

“Arwf?! *(Wait! We’re right in front of her?!)*”

Lying sprawled on a big rock shelf is a golden lion. Her build is a little bit bigger than my current size, but the power radiating from her is stronger than that from Gigas.

“Grrrrr...”

Oh, shit. My bark woke her up.

Behemoth’s eyes are glowing crimson, telling me that she, too, has been brainwashed by the Demon Lord.

Has the time finally come for me to fight at my full strength?

It’s not the time to start saying things like *I don’t wanna*. I lower myself, watching Behemoth’s movements carefully so I can react whenever I need to.

“Grrrrrrr...”

With a groan, Behemoth slowly picks herself up, then gazes at me.

It seems I’ve been identified as an enemy. Behemoth draws in a breath, taking an offensive posture.

And then...

“Grrrrraaaaaahhhh!! *(I’m in loooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooove!!)*”

There’s the shrill sound of shattering glass, and then her crimson eyes return to their regular blue.

“A-arwf?! *(D-did she just break the brainwashing on her own?!)*”

“Grrr! *(The power of love doth exceed all else! I am in love! Yea, I have fallen for thee!)*”

You’ve been like this for a thousand years?!

“Grrrrr. (Mm. I understand the details. I must needs slumber like this, yes?)”

“Yes. If you would agree to the seal, then it will add almost nothing to my burden.”

After hearing the circumstances from us, Behemoth excitedly buried herself in the ground. And the hole is one that she dug personally.

“Arf, arf. (You’re crazy, right up to the end, huh? Though personally, I’m pretty lucky for not having to do any fighting.)”

Wouldn’t it be a better idea to have *her* fight the Demon Lord instead? She freed herself from the brainwashing, after all.

“The miasma only gets thicker the closer one gets to the Demon Lord. If any monster aside from you, Routa, were to get too close, they would become underlings again.”

Huh? Then what about this mouse and cat riding on my back?

“Squeak. (Well, I am a dragon. We are different from monsters. Papa and Mama weren’t brainwashed, either, remember?)”

“Meow. (And Nahura is a homunculus created with alchemy, so...)”

Oh, right. You two aren’t even monsters, huh?

“Grwl! (Then I bid thee farewell, my beautiful silver wolf! I shall ask thy name when I next awaken!)”

Right, okay, so just go to sleep for a thousand years like we told you.

Lady Eili’s magic activates, and Behemoth is sealed beneath the ground without resistance. And with that, we’ve been able to seal all five of the demon generals.

The Demon Lord himself is the only one left, huh? We’ll have to defeat him, at

least, instead of sealing him. He's sure to be a fearsome opponent, but I don't actually know a single thing about him.

What's his name? What does he look like? What are his powers? I know almost nothing.

What I do know is that he's brainwashing monsters with the miasma, manipulating them as he desires—and that if we leave him be, the world will certainly be destroyed.

“Are you prepared, Routa?”

“Arf, arf. *(No, but I know I've just gotta do it anyway.)*”

“All of this has only been preparation. This is where the real challenge begins.”

If this place is the Demon Lord's territory, I bet he has his own castle. I imagine one bigger and gaudier than even Carmilla's crystal castle.

Still, we haven't seen any structures like that despite running around the forest to fight the Five Demon Generals. Even when we were flying in the sky on dragon-form Len's back, all we saw was the center of the forest swirling with miasma—it didn't look like anything was built there.

“You're correct in your analysis.”

“Arf? *(Wait, so there's no castle? Is our Demon Lord homeless?)*”

Even I get to be raised in a wonderful mansion. The king of all the monsters doesn't even have his own house?

Pfft. How pathetic.

“Not exactly. Maybe it would be better to say the Demon Lord is the castle *itself*.”

The farther in we go, the thicker the miasma grows, blocking our view of what's in front of us. If Lady Eili wasn't stopping the miasma with a bounded-field spell, it probably would have been a lot harder to progress.

“Arwf, arwf? *(The Demon Lord is a castle? What does that mean? I don't get it.)*”

Hecate doesn't answer me; she stops, then says, "This *place* is the Demon Lord."

A black shadow is under Hecate's feet. It appears to lead all the way into the distance, though it's hard to see through the miasma.

"Arf? (*This shadow thing—is that the Demon Lord?*)"

"Routa, do you know anything about labyrinths?"

Yeah, I remember them. They spring up in places where mana accumulates, form dungeons underground, lure in and brainwash monsters from outside, use the accumulated mana to create new monsters, and so on. Sounds pretty annoying, if you ask me.

They were popping up in the forest in the future, too, and Garo and the Fen Wolves always ask me to blow them up with my barf beam. And when Alstera came, we even tailed her and ended up going into a labyrinth ourselves.

It smelled like public park bathroom in there... So bad. Though for monsters, it's apparently a good smell that they have trouble resisting.

"Yes. The Demon Lord's true identity is that labyrinth, grown to its greatest size."

"Arwf?! (*Huh?! So the Demon Lord isn't even a monster?!*)"

The mental image of the Demon Lord I've been holding on to completely shatters. I was imagining this hot, humanoid demon dude.

"There just happened to be a place in this frontier region where mana had an easy time gathering. After such a long time without anyone finding it, the mana just kept building up, undeterred."

Oh, and when mana builds up, monsters get created and labyrinths pop up, right?

"No, that's not exactly correct. It actually happens when that reservoir of mana takes on a mind of its own."

Apparently, it will obtain consciousness, and find a way to direct the mana for the first time—and that consciousness takes on a desired form.

“It could be a wild animal on the verge of death who wishes to continue living. Or it could be a greedy human after treasure. The huge amount of amassed mana assumes a form based on the mind of the one who touched it.”

So that’s how they worked on the inside?

“This shadow is essentially a giant labyrinth. Instead of splitting cracks in the earth, it splits them in dimensions, spreading them wide, gaining such immense power that its depths may as well be infinite.”

So once you go in, you can’t come out—like a bottomless swamp.

Now that she mentions it, the monsters being controlled, not least of all the Five Demon Generals, seem to resemble the characteristics of labyrinths. It’s just that this one’s scope is massive, combined with the fact that nobody’s ever noticed it.

“Hypothetically, let’s call this shadow the Demon Lord Labyrinth. Once you enter this shadow—enter the Demon Lord Labyrinth—you’ll end up walking through infinite corridors filled with darkness, forever.”

I audibly gulp.

“Since it is a labyrinth, it has a core at its very deepest part. That is the one rule we know for sure. But nobody exists who can traverse the practically infinite distance.”

A super-high-level labyrinth that nobody can traverse: *That* is the true identity of the Demon Lord.

“That was why we had no choice but to seal it,” says Lady Eili, lowering her eyes sadly.

She must have known the true identity of the Demon Lord, too. Actually, knowing that is probably how she came up with her sealing spell.

She put herself on the line to think up this healing magic, which would continue to cause suffering for all her descendants—and now that she knows it would fail in the end, her agony must be unbearable.

She came all this way, believing that this is the reason she was born, but now all that had crumbled right before her very eyes.

But instead of being sad for herself, she was sad for Hecate's life after hers and had acted in such a way that she couldn't make it any worse than this. Her joy and energy had doubtlessly been false. And yet, she'd still come all this way with us.

What a strong person she is. And that, too, is very much like Lady Mary.

"Changing that future is the reason we're here."

That's right. I'm gonna pass on any future where the young lady has to die young, thank you very much. I want her to live a long time, having fun with me.

"Now that we're here, it's a simple affair."

Hecate explains the final process of her plan that took her a thousand years to think of.

"In the future, I was not able to gain enough power to defeat the Demon Lord Labyrinth, even if I had come back a thousand years. However, that problem was solved—thanks to your massive amount of mana, Routa, and your ultimate destruction magic."

Ultimate destruction magic can destroy anything. Whether it's gaps in dimensions or infinite corridors, it's all the same to me.

But I need a huge amount of mana to cast it, and even Hecate, after a thousand years of training, never gained the necessary power to put her own plan into motion.

"But you'll be able to pierce through the infinite corridors and fire at the Demon Lord's core."

I get it. So that was why Hecate said I was the cornerstone of this plan.

"You'll only have one chance. Even with your mana, at full power, you'll only just be able to reach."

So if I miss, it's all over?

"....."

Wait, wait, wait. I'd rather tell her not to say things that important right now. I'm famous for being weak when push comes to shove. Famous in my mind,

anyway. I'm getting kind of nervous now. I think my stomach hurts. Can I use the bathroom first?

"I'll take aim for you. You just have to fire your ultimate destruction magic with all your might."

In that case, we should be able to manage. It's hard for me to adjust the power downward, but if all you need me to do is shoot it with everything I have, it's simple.

"Squeak... *(Still, ultimate destruction magic shouldn't be something you can fire so easily...)*"

"Meow. *(Well, this is Routa we're talking about. It's a little late for that now.)*"

Enough from the peanut gallery.

"I ask you again. Are you ready?"

"...Arwf! *(...Okay. Let's do it!)*"

There's no point dallying. Hecate is saying I can do it. All I have to do is believe in her and not pull any punches with my barf beam.

Hecate raises her staff and casts a spell. She probably received it from future Hecate, for sensing the location of the Demon Lord's core and controlling my beam so it doesn't shift even a tiny bit.

Forming this maximum-efficiency spell, which she is able to use even as her present self, she gives me the signal, sweat dripping down her forehead.

"Fire at will."

"Arwf. *(Well, then, don't mind if I do.)*"

I summon more power than I ever have before, and suck in a breath.

"GRRRAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!! *(Mr. Demon Lord, helloooooooooo! And good-byeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!!)*"

A ray of light, several times the width of the wide-open jaws it bursts out of, shoots toward the shadow. The shadow swallows up the ray of light, as though nothing exists on the other end.

I don't know how far my full-power beam is going. That's because I don't have

any way of finding out what's on the other end of this shadow.

Hecate is using all her strength to make aiming corrections. She has her eyes shut tightly, focusing on her mana-based detection lest she miss even a slight movement from the core. All I can do is continue barfing up this beam until my mana runs out. The beam's emission lasts several seconds, with so much light being fired that even I can't see ahead of me.

And then, finally, my mana runs out, and the beam's discharge ends.

"...Hhh... Hhh...! (*H-how was that, Hecate...?! Did it reach...?!*)"

It's been a long time since this Fenrir body has run out of breath. This might be the first time since my body grew.

Despite how much strength I fired the beam with, the shadow shows no change. It stays still, like the quiet surface of a nighttime lake.

"....."

Hecate, staff still raised, doesn't answer. Her observation of the Demon Lord's core seems to be ongoing. We can only gulp audibly as we watch her work.

"...Yes," she murmurs suddenly.

At the same time, the shadow stirs violently.

As though a gale was blowing through, as if the shadow were a living creature writhing in agony, its surface begins to squirm until cracks appear in its spherical form.

And then, with a sound like glass shattering, the shadow bursts into small pieces.

"S-squeak?! (*D-did we get it?!*)"

Um, Len, could you *not* jinx us, please?

But even after waiting ten seconds, then another ten, the broken shadow remained motionless.

"I just observed it. I can verify that Routa's ultimate destruction magic pierced the Demon Lord Labyrinth's core."

With those words, we're finally able to let out sighs of relief.

“Arwwwwwwf!! (We did it! Now the future is gonna change!)”

Lady Mary won't have to die, and generations of Faulks family members will have longer lifespans.

Once that happens, what will become of Lady Mary's mother? Like, would she be alive once we get back to our time period?

Well, we'll just have to find out what changed after returning home. Our role here is at an end. Hecate will keep an eye on history after this for us.

“Thank you, Routa. You've saved the world.”

“Arf, arf. (Aw, stop it. That's such an embarrassing thing to say to someone.)”

I only came here to save Lady Mary—actually, strictly speaking, it was to protect my own peaceful pet life. Hecate was the one who really put in the work. I'm glad her thousand-year efforts bore fruit.

“Yes, my future self has just been saved from her pain. I, however, am just starting that job.”

Now that the Demon Lord is done for, the timeline of history will change greatly. Hecate will be making full use of her future knowledge to adjust everything so that the future is close to the one we were in.

Those thousand years will be a different sort of struggle for her. I can't know what the next millennium will be like for Hecate, but I do realize it's going to be very difficult.

“Arwf. (You can thank me in a thousand years.)”

It'll only be a moment from my point of view, but it will be a long time from Hecate's. Even so, we swear to our unchanging friendship and grin at each other.

“Routa! Hecate! You all did it!”

Lady Eili dives into my fluff with tears in her eyes.

“I'm so glad! I'm so happy! Ahhhhh!”

As she hugs all of us at once, I'm a little embarrassed. But Lady Eili, happier than anyone else, feels so dear to me that I nuzzle her with my nose.

That wasn't the reason we were so late to react.

We'd defeated the Demon Lord, but the miasma wasn't clearing up. It was our own foolishness to not have realized that.

From beyond the dense miasma, countless pitch-black hands reach out to attack us.

"Huh?!"

Like the broken shadow, the hands are impossibly dark, not reflecting anything. They coil around our bodies so tightly that we're unable to put up a struggle.

Beyond, the supposedly broken shadow remains, and in the next moment, we're swallowed by it.



"A-arwf?! (*I-is everyone all right?!*)"

All those hands disappeared after we got swallowed by the shadow, but it's so dark I can't see anyone. It has me bewildered.

I'm not standing on anything. I can breathe, but there isn't any light at all in here. Even *my* vision can't make out a single thing.

"Everyone, calm down."

Hecate's voice. At the same time, an orb of light appears, illuminating us.

"Are you all there?"

"Squeak. (*My, my. This is certainly not good.*)"

"Mew! (*Lady Len, it's all because you jinxed us!*)"

"Arf, arf! (*That's right! This is your fault.*)"

"S-squeak?! (*Wh-what was that?! I've done nothing wrong!*)"

It doesn't seem like anyone else is injured. This also isn't the time to be horsing around, but the exchange did calm us down.

"Arwf? (*Hecate, does this mean we didn't defeat the Demon Lord?*)"

"...I'm certain you pierced the core."

But the shadow is still present, and now we've been absorbed by the Demon Lord Labyrinth.

Hecate is biting her lip so hard blood is trickling from it. "...The plan is a failure," she says. "Let's get out of here. Nahura's spatial magic should allow us to escape."

"A-arwf, arwf! (*H-hey, wait, but that means the future—*)"

"Hasn't changed. One thousand years from now, it likely has converged on the same future."

It can't be. We came all this way just to fail?

"But we'll do it again. I'll spend a thousand years rethinking the plan," declares Hecate, frustration and anger filling her eyes. "And next time, I won't let it end like this."

But then, won't that mean Lady Eili will die in a few years? Are you okay with that?

"Hecate, I'll be fine," says Lady Eili, a little loneliness in her eyes, drawing up to Hecate. "I will seal the Demon Lord. That is what I intended to do from the start. My resolve hasn't wavered."

"I'm so sorry, Eili..."

"Please, don't apologize. You haven't given up, have you? I'm sure it will work the next time around."

Is there seriously nothing we can do? I can't bear to go home like this. Once we go back, all we'll have waiting for us is Lady Mary's imminent death and the Demon Lord's revival.

Should I stay behind to help Hecate with her plan? That's the only thing I can think of.

My enthusiasm for this has hit bottom.

"Nahura, please get us out."

"Mew... (*Yes, at once...*)"

Nahura deploys her spatial magic. She beckons to us with her front paw like

she always does—then stops.

“A-arwf? (*H-hey, what’s wrong, Nahura?*)”

If we’re going to escape, shouldn’t we be quick about it? I know I’ve lost my energy, but I still don’t intend to die in the Demon Lord Labyrinth like this.

But Nahura stays still, as though frozen—in fact, nobody else is moving, either. It’s almost like time has stopped.

“Routa... Routa Okami?”

I recognize that voice. There’s only one person who knows my name from my previous life.

“Arwf?! (*The goddess?!*)”

Yes—standing before me is the very goddess who reincarnated me.



“It’s been a little over six months, hasn’t it, Routa?”

The floaty, pink-haired, soft-and-fluffy goddess is, for some reason, right in front of me.

It’s her fault I was reborn as Fenrir instead of a normal dog.

I’ve got a whole mountain of complaints for her before I ask her why she’s here.

“A-arwf... (*Wh-why, you...*)”

“I’m sorry to drop in so suddenly, but first, please accept this.”

“A-arf? (*Y-yeah?*)”

With quiet motions, the goddess lowers herself to her knees, then bows her head in a perfect manner of— “I’m incredibly sorry!”

—groveling! The goddess is groveling! These *isekai* reincarnations always have this event!

Except the timing is all messed up. Isn’t it supposed to happen before reincarnating?

“Actually, I need to speak to you about some relatively serious matters, so I

figured it would be best to lighten the mood first...”

If you’re capable of being that considerate, why didn’t you reincarnate me as a dog like you were supposed to?

“Well, I thought it would all work out!”

Her lack of genuine remorse makes it even worse.

Still, if I hadn’t been reborn as Fenrir, I wouldn’t have overcome all of those trials.

All I wanted was to be reborn as the dog of a rich family. How did it come to this?

“I thought it would work out...”

Don’t you think you should have said something to begin with, Miss Goddess?

“Tee-hee.”

I really want to wipe that dumb smile off her face. I thought she wanted to have a serious conversation, but her happy-go-lucky attitude is kind of killing the mood.



“Arf, arf? (Wait, so if you showed up, does that mean I’m going to die after this?)”

Did she come to lead me to my next place of reincarnation?

“No, the situation is worse than that,” says the goddess, shaking her head. “If this goes on any longer, this timeline will become cyclical, and you’ll be trapped in a time loop. To be more precise, Hecate is the one who’ll be trapped.”

“Arf, arf? (A time loop? You mean that thing where you repeat the same events over and over forever?)”

With my scant sci-fi knowledge, that’s about all I understand.

“Yes, that sort of loop.”

Seems I was right, though.

“At this rate, if you follow Hecate’s directions and escape from here, then redo the plan after another millennium, you’ll fail in the end. It will never change, no matter how many times you try.”

The goddess speaks as though she’s seen it happen. And given the sadness in her eyes, maybe she really has.

“I’m sorry. Even I only observed this event in this very moment. I’ve seen all the possible futures using the power of the gods, but no matter how many times you redo this, Hecate will always fail. And with her memories continuously passed down through thousands of years, Hecate’s mind will break, and she’ll stop inheriting them.”

I can’t imagine how awful that would be.

But it must be absolute hell for Hecate—the one who would do anything to save Lady Eili and Lady Mary—to give up and abandon everything.

“And when you go back again after that, the loop will be complete. Hecate will not have inherited her memories, and she will spend a thousand years coming up with her original plan to defeat the Demon Lord. And she’s already run through that loop many times. So many times that even I, a goddess, can’t count them all.”

Wait, then I've been reincarnated as Fenrir multiple times already? How many times? Tens of thousands? Millions? Any number a goddess can't even understand is too terrifying to imagine.

"Arf... (Ahh, so then you...)"

Without meaning to, I realize the answer to what's been on my mind.

Why did the lake near the mansion exist before I made that hole?

Why did the thousand-year covenant of the Fen Wolves happen before I went to the past?

Why does the same name as me, Routa, show up as the hero in the fairy tale about what happened a millennium ago?

If the loop has already begun, it would explain everything.

"This is the moment wherein this world's history completely stops."

"Arf... (But that's...)"

I'm stricken with a sense of hopelessness. It's even worse than hearing that we failed to slay the Demon Lord.

"Arf, arf?! (That's... That can't be! That's insane! Everyone tried so hard to get here! And it was all for nothing?! And no matter how many times they try, it won't mean anything?!)"

"Routa..."

"Woof, woof?! (Damn it, isn't there anything you can do?! Is there really no way to break out of this loop?!)"

"There is."

"Arwrw! (Oh, of course there is!)"

I'd like you to pretend I didn't shout just now. Anyway, if there was a way, then open with that! You made me get all serious for no reason!

"Until now, I had no observations, and no way of telling this to you. However, in this single instant... Right now, I can rewrite the historical singularity."

Wait, so you *can* do it? Why didn't you do it sooner? Sheesh, you really had

me scared. Did I pee myself at all?

“Actually, you’re the one who will be doing the rewriting.”

“Arf? *(Me? Wait, you want me to do it?)*”

You can’t just use your weird goddess powers to, you know, *bam-bam-bam* and you’re done?

“You are currently standing at a crossroads.”

The goddess holds up two fingers, then puts one of them down.

“The first path is to go with Hecate and use spatial magic to escape this place. Everyone will live, but the Demon Lord will not be defeated, and Saint Eilene will use her seal. As I said before, this equates to closing the loop. The same thousand years will keep on happening, and eventually you’ll go back to the beginning.”

I want to know what the other path is. But the goddess seems to be hesitant to say.

“Arf, arf. *(Oh, come on, please just tell me already. You’re making me more anxious holding back like that.)*”

“...All right. I want you to listen calmly.”

After I press her, the goddess puts down the other finger.

“The other path is for you to stay in this place and attack the Demon Lord’s core once again.”

“Arf? *(Huh? That’s it?)*”

Why, that’ll be easy!

“Your ultimate destruction magic has certainly dealt damage to the Demon Lord. Hecate and the others don’t realize this, but the Demon Lord is very weak now as well. If you fire again, with all your might, you’ll be able to defeat it for real.”

Awesome! A sure victory!

If all I have to do is barf up another beam, I’ll barf up as many as you want.

“The problem comes after that. If you do defeat the Demon Lord that way, you will be unable to escape this great labyrinth’s collapse. If you fall through a dimensional crack, you’ll either be adrift in this darkness forever—or, if you’re lucky, you’ll get warped away to some other place. It could be a million years later, or a million years earlier. And it’s possible you won’t even end up in this world.”

“Arwf... (Ah, I get it... I have to choose between giving up my own life or everyone else’s...)”

Of course.

“Arf, arf. (And if I choose to run away, what kind of life would I— Wait, no, I know exactly how it’ll be.)”

I would never enjoy a life without Lady Mary. Since there isn’t another me a thousand years from now, I must have given up at some point.

“...I’m so sorry for having you make such a terrible choice.”

“Arf, arf. (You’re telling me. You’re a cruel goddess, you know that? All I wanted was to be the pampered pooch of a rich family, and you reincarnated me as Fenrir. And now you’re telling me I have to give up my own life to slay the Demon Lord.)”

“...I’m truly sorry.”

The goddess bows her head deeply.

Suddenly, I shout at the top of my lungs,

“Arwf, arwrwrwrw!! (No, no, no! I don’t want to die! And I don’t want to get stuck in this darkness forever! And I don’t want to leave everyone! A million years in the past, or the future—there’s probably no humans around! I wouldn’t be able to eat delicious food! I want to see Lady Mary again! I want her to pet me! Ahhhhh, noooooooooo, I don’t want this!!)”

...Phew. I feel better now.

Having vented all my frustrations, I’ve calmed down a bit.

Well, these six months, for me, have basically been paradise. The kind young lady, the old man’s delicious food, and all the other people in the mansion

pamper me, too. I was all alone in my past life, but now I've made so many friends.

Originally, I was corporate livestock, used and discarded by an exploitative company. I've definitely gotten my money's worth: It's been absolute bliss being able to live a little longer. I've made so many fun memories with them. If I ran away without returning the kindness I've been shown, I wouldn't be able to call myself the pet of the Faulks family.

After all, I am Lady Mary's loyal dog! That's right—a dog!

It's important, so I say it again.

I am Lady Mary's one and only beloved dog!

"Arwf! (Which means there's only one thing to do!)"



"Are you sure about this?"

"Arwf! (Yeah! ...Actually, the longer I have to think, the more my resolve wavers, so please be quick about it.)"

I've always been one to lapse into laziness.

The goddess gives a giggle, then folds her arms.

"I will at least pray for your safety."

A goddess, praying? That's pretty surreal—and the moment I think that, time starts moving again.

"Arf, arf! (Nahura! One moment! Hit the brakes!)"

"M-mew, mew!?! (H-huh?! What's going on?!)"

"Woof, woof! (I don't have time to explain! Leave me here and get yourselves out! I'm the only one who needs to be here for the rest!)"

"Squeak?! (Huh?! What are you saying?!)"

"Routa?! Have you thought of something?!"

"Arf! (Yeah! A goddess gave me the perfect plan!)"

So please, go. Seriously, I'm hopeless, and I'll probably tell you to take me

with you if this drags on much longer.

“Routa! You can’t!”

Sensing something from my behavior, Lady Eili comes up and hugs me.

“Arf, arf... (Lady Eili, I’m happy I was able to go on this journey with you. You look exactly like Lady Mary, which is why I wasn’t lonely even away from her...)”

“Routa...”

So I want you to go now. I’ll defeat the Demon Lord, and you need to keep the thread of happiness intact until the day Lady Mary is born.

“Woof! *(Do it, Nahura!)*”

“Meow! *(Geez, Routa, you’re always so abrupt with these things!)*”

Nahura casts her spatial magic, sending everyone but me outside the shadow.

“Routa...!”

“Ah, Routa...!”

Lady Eili and Hecate reach out for me before they vanish.

The sad part is over. Now I just have to defeat the Demon Lord.

“...Arf. (...Okay, guess it’s time.)”

I can feel a weight that shouldn’t be there on my head.

“Squeak. *(‘Guess it’s time’ nothing.)*”

“Arwf?! *(Len?!)*”

“Meow. (I don’t know what you’re planning to do, Routa, but the Demon Lord’s core isn’t in that direction!)”

“Arwrw?! *(Even you, Nahura?!)*”

After the spatial magic sent them outside, they must have come right back again on their own “Arwf...? *(But why did you come back...?)*”

“Squeak? *(Did you think I would leave my beloved alone and escape by myself?)*”

“Meow! *(Nahura isn’t coldhearted enough to leave a friend behind, either!)*”

So in the end, it's down to the Three Stooges, huh?

"Arwf, arwf! (Geez, you guys! I can't believe you. Let me be cool just one time!)"

"Squeak. (What are you saying? I know you're actually happy about it. Your voice is shaking.)"

"Meow! (We know best that you're a good-for-nothing! How long do you think we've been riding on your back? We can tell you're forcing yourself!)"

Look, you... You're gonna make me cry!

To be honest, I was super-discouraged!

And so, I tell them the final plan, given to me by the goddess.

"Squeak. (No, no matter how you think about it, you couldn't do it alone. You just used up all your mana, didn't you?)"

"Mew. (And how did you plan on taking aim? If you missed, it would've been all for naught.)"

You know what? That's a fair point.

That goddess was a useless hunk of junk right until the end. I can just imagine her trying to defend herself, saying, "I knew they would come with you!"

You have to make it clear, or I won't understand, Goddess.

"Squeak! (I'll supply you with mana. Take it all!)"

"Meow. (You can leave the spell's control to me. I can pick out the target even better than the Hecate from this time period can.)"

With Len and Nahura's help, I prepare to fire my beam again.

"Arwf! (Let's do it! Everyone ready?!)"

"Squeak! (Ready anytime!)"

"Mew! (I'll follow you anywhere!)"

Rallying every last bit of energy, I howl out one final roar.

"GARUUUOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOONNNNNN!! (I don't care if you're a Demon Lord! I'll obliterate anyone who gets in the way of my

pampered pooch life!!)”

A lance of pure white light pierces the darkness, penetrating the core far in the distance.

This time, it’s destroyed in its entirety, and with a silent scream, the Demon Lord dissipates.

And then the walls between dimensions crumble, and we fall into one of the gaps.



Epilogue

When I open my eyes, I notice the warmth that should be beside me isn't there.

Feeling a wetness on my cheeks, I think to myself that I've had a sad dream.

This bed is too big to sleep in alone.

The one I'm supposed to say good morning to isn't here.

"Routa... You're a bad dog for being gone a whole month... When you get back, you'll be punished..."

I'll spank him really hard.

That's a lie. When he comes back, I'll probably end up spoiling him a lot.

It's been almost a month since Routa disappeared. Snow has piled up outside the window; the scenery is now the perfect picture of winter.

Since then, I've gotten a lot better. I don't get fevers or suffer sudden shortness of breath anymore. Dr. Hecate gave me her seal of approval that we don't have to worry about relapse.

But Routa isn't here to be happy with me.

"Lady Mary, are you awake?"

There's a knock at the door, and Toa, the maid, enters with the morning tea. She's a full-fledged maid now. The tea she makes is just as good as Miranda's.

"Routa didn't come back yesterday, either, did he...?"

"Are you lonely, too, Toa?"

"...Yes, just a little."

"Me too. Just a little."

Routa will come back for sure.

He's just having a little too much fun out there. He's just running late.



It's spring now.

Routa hasn't come home yet.

Eliza, my friend, came to visit me today. She brought her ground dragon, Christina, too. My father's airship is being run officially now, and they come to the mansion to play a lot.

"Mary, listen to this! Your artwork won another prize in the Royal Capital! A lot of art dealers are being really noisy about when you'll make another!"

"Well, then I'll have to do another one of Routa."

"...That was a picture of Routa?"

"Yes. They all are, why?"

"Ah... Yes. You are a genius, Mary, to be able to express so many different things in a single portrait."

"Hee-hee. Thanks for the compliment," I say happily.

Eliza makes a sad face. I wonder why?

"...Mary, won't you come to the school in the capital with me? If you go there, you'll be able to make lots of friends. And then you won't be lonely—"

I shake my head. "Routa would probably be shocked if he came back and I wasn't here."

"Yes... I suppose he would. I swear, where is that dog of yours?"

"Yes, he really is a bad boy! When he comes back, I'm not letting him escape anymore."

While I'm miming his punishment, Eliza comes over and hugs me.

For some reason, I start to cry.



Summer comes.

“Without him here, there’s no point in growing my collection of swords.”

Zenobia’s room is filled with her vast sword collection.

I know she actually slashes Routa with them and gets them broken. I’ve seen her from my window while I’m studying, sneaking away with Routa to do something. At first, I was really worried about him, but then I realized that he’s incredibly strong, and at some point, I started to pity Zenobia.

“Stupid thing. When he comes back, I’ll punish him with this new blade smithed by Rouen,” says Zenobia as she happily shows me the sword she just bought.

I really do feel bad for her.



Autumn comes.

I’ve gotten a little taller—taller than Eliza, in fact. She seemed a bit frustrated when I passed her in height. Apparently, she drinks a lot of milk, but I guess I just grow faster.

I might be so tall that when Routa comes home, he might not even recognize me.



Winter comes.

“With him gone, our food supply is constantly packed to the brim. How much was he even eating, all by himself?”

The cook, James, gives a hearty laugh.

His cooking is really tasty. I never get tired of it, even though I eat it every day.

Routa loved his food, too. Mr. James has complained before about there being no point to making it if Routa isn’t here.

Miss Alstera came to visit today.



Spring comes.

Miss Alstera has been doing a lot, going all over the world, to make sure monsters don't attack humans, while also searching for Routa.

Dr. Hecate told me that there's a slight chance Routa will come back to this time axis.

I didn't understand a lot of what she said, since it was all very complicated, but apparently, Routa fell into a tear in dimensions and went somewhere far away.

If we don't know where he went, it's possible he might suddenly pop up right next to me.

That's what Dr. Hecate said. I think it's possible, too.

"Heya—sorry, I couldn't find him this time, either. But you can leave it to me. Next time, I'll find Routa for certain!"

"Okay! I'll be looking forward to it!"

I truly do believe it.

And yet Alstera's face is so sad.



Summer comes.

"Human, has Lord Routa returned?"

"Has he?"

"Hiding him will do no one any good."

"Wait, he's still gone?"

"I promise, I'll tell you when he's back."

The five elf sisters living in the forest visited us. The elves seem to be waiting eagerly for Routa to come back, too. I know his wolf friends are also watching the mansion from afar.

They're all waiting for you to come home.

Please, come home soon, Routa.



It's autumn now.

"You've become truly beautiful, Lady Mary."

"Mgh. Do you mean I wasn't pretty before?"

"When you make that face, you look just like you used to."

"Mgh! Miranda, you're mean."

Toa has the day off today, so Miranda is with me.

Since I've gotten better, Father hasn't been staying in the mansion much. His work seems to be taking up more and more of his time, but he still visits on occasion.

No, that isn't quite right.

He comes to visit Mother. I just happen to be here. They always get along. They keep asking if I want a brother or sister next.

I think either would be adorable.

...I wonder if I can become someone like that one day. I can't even imagine it.

What do you think, Routa?

If you don't come home soon, I might already be someone's wife the next time we meet.



And so, autumn ends, winter comes, and spring visits once again.

"Routa..."

I stare vacantly out the window.

Father and Mother are watching me with deep concern. I can tell by the reflection in the glass.

I have to be energetic, and I'm worrying everyone. But for some reason, I can't get myself to move much.

I've forgotten how to smile. I try every now and then, but it's no use.

"....."

The trees in the garden are all covered in green leaves.

“...Come to think of it, this was around the time when Routa first came to us...”

He was such a tiny puppy in the beginning, and he got big really fast. But he was still so cute, and he was always patient with me, despite how rowdy I was. We would play ball, swim together in the lake, and secretly snatch Mr. James’s cooking.

Recalling all those fun memories one after another, I can no longer hold back the tears.

I want to see him... I really do...

“Mary...”

Father and Mother embrace my shoulders.

If I don’t stop crying soon, they’ll start to worry about me again.

I try to force myself to smile, but I can’t, and I don’t even have the energy to speak.

And that was when it happened.

A knocking at the window.

“Mary, do you have a moment?”

It’s Dr. Hecate.

“Did you...need something...?”

“Come with me.”

Dr. Hecate’s smile makes me stop crying for some reason.

At her invitation, I go outside.

“Over here. Come,” says Hecate, leading me by the hand.

We’re headed for the mansion’s front gate.

“Ahh, there you are. You’re late, Mary.” Eliza is here.

“Lady Mary, please excuse me.” Miranda wipes my tearstained face.

“Heya! If you show up looking like that, you’ll make him worry.” Alstera and Zenobia, and everyone I know, are all gathered at the mansion’s front gate.

“Dr. Hecate, what is this...?”

“Stand right here.”

Dr. Hecate pushes me to the fore and turns me so I’m facing out the gate.

“Can you see it?”

Hecate points, and I can see a small white dot.

It seems to be getting closer to here, little by little.

“My research finally bore fruit mere hours ago. I hurried to gather his acquaintances together. This is the first time I’ve used spatial magic so many times in a row. Ahh, I’m so tired.”

Dr. Hecate’s sigh doesn’t even reach my ears at this point.

My feet start moving on their own, and then they get faster and faster, and before I know it, I’m running so hard I’m out of breath.

Because I already know who that is up there.



“Woof, woof! (*Ahh, come on! You guys made us late getting home!*)”

“Squeak! (*You being seduced by your appetite is what caused all this to begin with!*)”

“Meow! (*Who would have thought we’d be warped to another world and end up saving them from their crisis, too?! That’s Rouda for you! Worst luck in the multiverse!*)”

It’s pandemonium as we shout at each other, walking up the path to the mansion. We really are a loud and annoying bunch—though that’s no different.

“Arwf! (*Shut up! We’re back now, as you can see, so I have at least a little luck!*)”

What were the chances of this? It would probably be harder to win the lottery a hundred times in a row.

“Arf, arf. (I was totally floored when Hecate contacted us in that other world.)”

“Squeak. (She didn’t have to research the Demon Lord’s seal anymore, so she spent a thousand years researching a way to bring us back? She’s nothing if not tenacious.)”

“Meow. (My mistress is amazing, if I do say so myself—for making it possible to summon us from another world as long as she has the mana!)”

“Arf, arf. (Speaking of mana, I’d totally forgotten about this collar.)”

Hecate used all my mana that had been slowly accumulating in the collar as a power source to summon us, which is how we made it back to our original world.

According to her, she wouldn’t have been able to do it with her own mana alone.

“Squeak. (If we’d gone straight to the place at the time she told us to, we would have gotten back a little earlier. But you were so busy basking in the hearty welcome from all the people you saved that we were late.)”

“Arf, arf! (It’s that other world’s food’s fault for being so good. That stuff rivaled old man James’s cooking!)”

“Meow. (The celebration party was a lot of fun! It was a blast—the drinking and singing went on for days.)”

“Arwf. (By the way, I wasn’t the one who kept on eating until the very end—that was you, Nahura.)”

“Meow! (What’s that supposed to mean?!)”

As we continue to argue, we see someone running straight at us from up ahead.

“Arf, arf, arf, arf? (Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, are you serious? This is bad.)”

Why, the young lady is all grown up! She must be about the same age as Lady Eili, the one I met in the past.

Crap, we were too late!

“Squeak. (More importantly, don’t you think you should go to her?)”

“Mew. (Lady Mary looks like she’s about to trip and fall.)”

Whoops—I can’t keep her waiting.

Lady Mary! I’m home!

I run to her, light on my feet, and reach her in the blink of an eye.

“Arwf! (Oops!)”

I hastily slam on the brakes.

The lady is right before my eyes now.

“Routa!!”

“Arwf! (Lady Mary!)”

She practically falls into me, and I catch her with my fluffy fur.

“Routa... Routa...!”

“Arwf, arwf. (Yep, it’s your one-and-only Routa.)”

And your face looks awful! It’s all covered in tears and snot. It’s so out of shape that it’s really cute, so I’ll give it some licks.

Glancing to where the young lady ran from, I see an array of familiar faces.

Whoa, whoa—you *all* came out for this? Is that what’s going on? A big welcoming party?

“Squeak, squeak? (Does nothing move you, beloved?)”

“Mrrr. (It truly is impossible.)”

What was that? I wanted to see Lady Mary more than anyone else, you know!

It’s just that with her being the first to cry, it actually calmed me down. You know how it is.

Lady Mary is still bawling into my chest, but she still finds the time to look up and say: “Welcome home, Routa.”

“Woof. (It’s good to be back.)”



I’m enjoying an afternoon nap under the big tree in the backyard.

After the reunion, everyone threw me a huge homecoming party.

Old man James put everything he had into cooking the food, everyone burst into tears of joy upon seeing me, and then everyone got really mad at me—especially Drills, who was furious.

Zenobia started testing swords on me right away, and even Alstera took a ride on my back, and the office-worker elf lady—the guild leader—got really drunk and rude.

Hecate drank all the liquor she wanted, Papa cried a whole lot, Mama's alive, the maids are all as beautiful as ever, and neither Toa nor Betty has gotten an inch taller.

The elf sisters pampered me like they always do, and Garo and the Fen Wolves started howling with joy at my return.

The Five Demon Generals are in the same positions they were even in this changed future—Mircalla is still the *tsundere* maid, Richmond is still the slick butler, Belgor is still the lively knife, Gigas is still asleep in his statue form, and Behemoth still gets into fights with Len about who should be my wife.



Everyone really let loose at that party.

If I may be crass, it was damn fun.

During that time, Lady Mary never once stopped clinging to me.

In fact, she still is.

With me sprawled out, she's using my body as a backrest to read her favorite book.

"Routa, don't you dare move. I'm just getting to the good part."

"Arwww... (*Okaaay...*)"

This is apparently my punishment.

It's not exactly painful not being able to move from here, and I like it when she clings to me anyway, so it's pretty far from a punishment.

"Mm...!"

After finishing her book, Lady Mary stretches and lazily flops herself down onto me.

"Hey, Routa?"

"Arwf? (*What is it, Lady Mary?*)"

"We'll be together forever from now on. This time for real. Seriously. Stay here forever and ever, okay?"

"Arf! (*Of course, Lady Mary. We'll be together forever and ever.*)"

I don't ever intend to leave you again. I'll live the rest of my life with you taking care of me.

Though my vow is pretty pathetic, she gives a broad smile and hugs me tightly.

A cool wind blows, as if to give its blessing to our promise.

And so, we enjoyed ourselves a pleasant nap.

Afterword

Good morning, afternoon, and evening, woof! It's been a while!

It really *has* been a while... Even with these Inumajin eyes, I could not predict that this would take an entire year to publish.

There's been a lot going on.

My health has been pretty bad this entire year, and then when I decided to write something new to take a breather, they made that into a book, too. Thankfully, that work is selling extremely well, but as I was breathlessly panting to write the two works at the same time, another publishing company requested work from me... I'm sorry! Please don't throw anything! Especially not rocks!

It's all the fault of my own naive schedule management. Please don't throw stones.

Still, I am incredibly grateful that this book made it safely into your hands.

With the deadline was fast approaching—and just as I thought I might make it—I suffered a significant injury (which has fully healed by now). When I started having to write with just one hand, I almost gave up—it would be impossible! But thanks to my editor, K-san, whose delicate round-the-clock management squeezed out as much time as possible, I somehow made it.

Truly, thank you so much. I think normally, I would have made it. Talk about incredibly skilled editors, eh?

In any case, this seventh volume marks the end of *Woof Woof Story*. I don't have the words to properly express my gratitude to everyone for reading the entire thing.

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for sticking with the story for three whole years. (Leaving aside that one blank year!)

The books are now complete, but I plan to write a new “everyday” kind of

story on the web.

It'll probably be a slow-paced short story about Routa eating delicious food, playing with Lady Mary, and provoking Zenobia, and it probably won't have a real ending, but please, check it out if you'd like.

I believe you'll find it right away if you google "Inumajin."

The advertisements go on, and I apologize for that, but it's just one more.

Kadokawa Books is now selling my new work, *A Saint? No, She's a Passing Beastmaster! ~The Absolutely Invincible Saint Has a Soft, Fluffy Journey!*

It's a story about a girl who is incredibly strong and smart, but likes soft, fluffy things so much that she goes a little crazy sometimes.

Everyone's saying the soft, fluffy black demon lord is way too cute. Please pick it up if you wish.

It's still only on the second volume, so I think it will be easy to catch up on.

I believe the third volume will be released in January.

Probably. I'm pretty sure. Maybe. Have faith in my future health. Please don't throw rocks at me!

A seriously good comic adaptation just came out the other day, courtesy of Toi Iida-sensei as well! I highly recommend it!

...Well, that's strange. Despite it being the last volume, this doesn't feel like a parting of ways at all.

I wanted to make this more pensive, but it seems that's impossible for this author.

The story of Routa and the others will probably keep going at its lazy, enjoyable pace.

I'd like to be reborn into another world and be raised by a rich young lady, but it seems I need to defeat this heap of totally white paper first. Damn.

Lastly, I'd like to give some words of thanks.

First, to my editor, K-san, whom I kept telling I'd write the next one according to schedule for sure, and managed to deceive right up until this last volume.

It wasn't on purpose! My health! It was suffering! Also, that new game! *Ghost of Tsushima*! It's too good! Oh, I got it—a new book! I'll bring you a really interesting new book! And then I'll definitely do it according to schedule, for sure this time! (A promise I definitely feel won't be kept)

Next, my thanks to Kochimo-san, who drew all the beautiful, adorable illustrations for every book.

I'm honored to have been able to work with you! It wouldn't be a stretch to say that thanks to your depictions of so many characters bursting with such life, *Woof Woof Story* was half you.

Actually, it might be more than half—maybe around seventy percent. Or eighty... Wait, that would mean my sentences are worth... (insert the author here, turning into salt and dispersing)

Next, to kiki koikuchi-sensei, who is drawing the comic adaptation.

I never thought I'd have a friend who also came in behind schedule, again... Birds of a feather really do flock together... I'm truly looking forward to the new volume!

Then, to everyone in the editing department. The designers. The proofreaders. The managers. The store clerks.

Woof Woof Story managed to be completed because of the support you and many others gave.

I deeply thank you.

And most of all, I give a heartfelt thanks to you—the ones who stuck around until the final volume!

I eagerly look forward to being able to meet you again somewhere!

So long!

July 2020 Inumajin

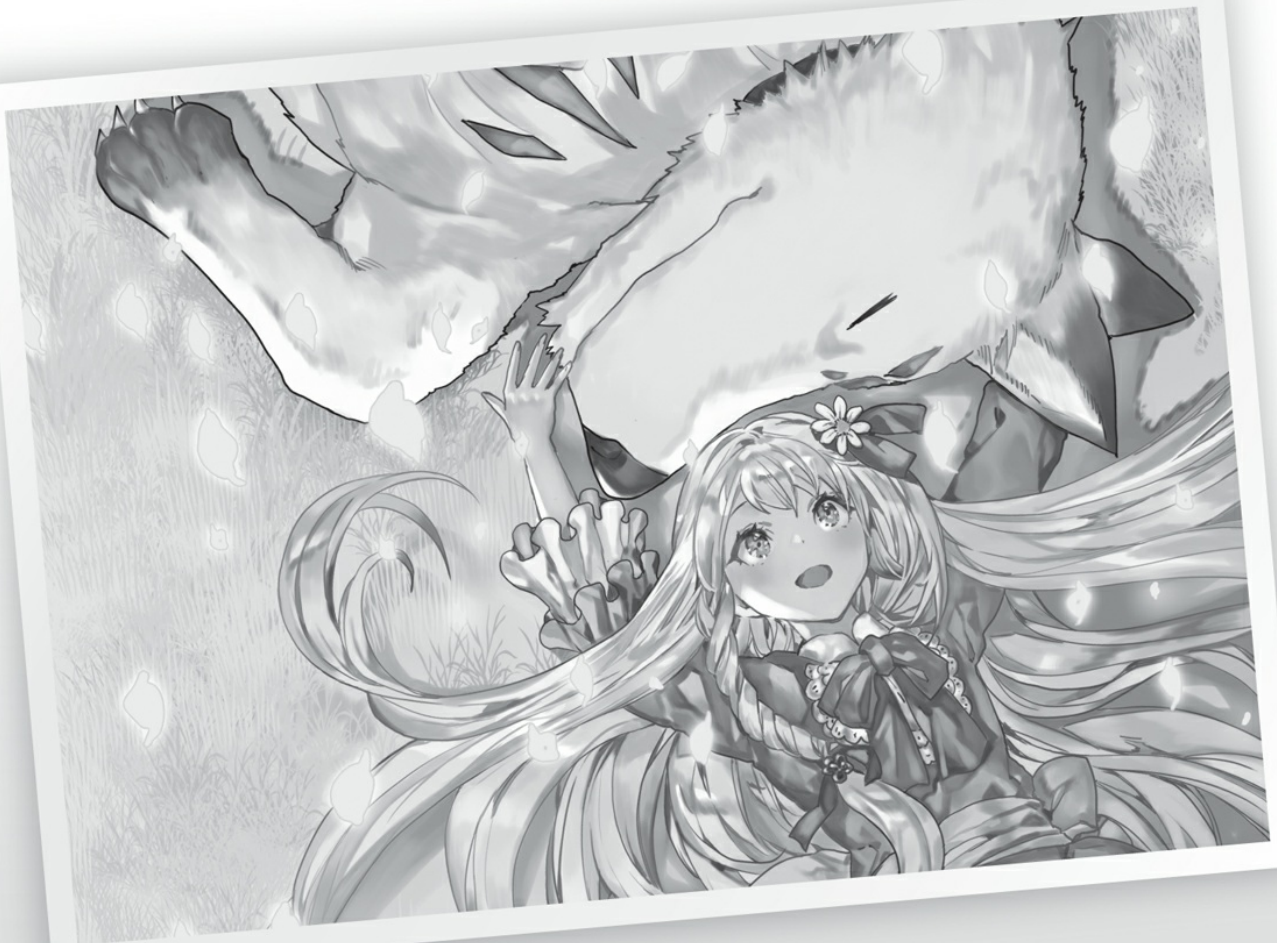
This is Kochimo, the illustrator.

It wasn't for long (though it felt like it), but as a dog lover,

I was incredibly honored to be involved in this work. Routa

kept getting more and more like a Shiba Inu. My sincere

thanks to everyone who read the books until the end!



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